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To Miss McClintock
with warm regards from
William B. Munro
January 14, 1928.



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THE INVISIBLE GOVERNMENT

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

THE GOVERNMENT OF THE UNITED STATES

THE GOVERNMENTS OF EUROPE

THE GOVERNMENT OF AMERICAN CITIES

THE GOVERNMENT OF EUROPEAN CITIES

PERSONALITY IN POLITICS

CURRENT PROBLEMS IN CITIZENSHIP

MUNICIPAL GOVERNMENT AND ADMINISTRATION

2 vols.

THE INVISIBLE GOVERNMENT

*The JACOB H. SCHIFF Foundation
Lectures Delivered at Cornell
University, 1926*

BY

WILLIAM BENNETT MUNRO

New York

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To
HENRY M. ROBINSON
NEIGHBOR AND FRIEND
IN TOKEN OF
MY ADMIRATION AND GRATITUDE.

FOREWORD

These six lectures deal with some of the controlling forces in contemporary American politics. Four of them were delivered at Cornell University in 1926, and two additional lectures, given at Pomona College in 1927, have been included. I am under obligations to *The Atlantic Monthly*, *Harpers Magazine*, *The Yale Review*, *Foreign Affairs*, and *The Forum* for permission to make use of material in articles which I have contributed to these periodicals during the past year.

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THE INVISIBLE GOVERNMENT

CHAPTER I

FUNDAMENTALISM IN POLITICS

"We wait for light, but behold obscurity."

—*Isaiah*, lix, 9.

A DOZEN years ago, in a notable speech before the New York Constitutional Convention, Mr. Elihu Root startled his hearers by a dramatic reference to what he called "our invisible government." "What is the government of this State?" he asked. "The government of the constitution?" "Oh, no," he replied. "Not half the time, nor half way." The greater part of it, he went on to declare, is a government controlled by forces which operate beneath the surface unseen by the eyes of men.

He was right. His characterization holds for every branch of government. All governments, wheresoever they operate, are subject to the pressure of invisible influences. Some of these influences are very powerful, work in a subtle way, and accomplish both good and harm. This is especially

true of the forces which we dignify with the name of national traditions. Every government rests upon a combination of the past with the present,—and the past exercises a greater influence than most people realize. What we call democracy, therefore, is to a considerable extent necrocracy, or a form of government by the graveyards.¹ Old precepts and phrases are handed down from one generation to another; they become part of a nation's heritage and undergo so much pious reiteration that in time almost everybody accepts them as gospel. Eventually they are dignified with the name of national traditions and serve as obstacles to the free unfolding of public opinion. In other words, we build up a sort of political fundamentalism.

From current discussions one would gain the impression that it is only in the field of religion that men are guided by faith in formulas and decline to be influenced by either science or history. But such is by no means the case. Religion is not the only field in which fundamentalism challenges science. It is not the most important field. There is more

¹ Necrocracy is a word of my own. I cannot find it in the dictionaries. But I used the term, not long ago, in the presence of Professor Gilbert Murray and he let it pass unmolested.

fundamentalism in the political than in the religious thought of the American people to-day, and it works greater injury both to the cause of national progress and to the interests of the social order.

Even the most casual observer of our political psychology must have noticed that there are literally millions of Americans who decline to accept things on faith in the realm of religion, but who do not have the slightest compunction about swallowing the catchwords, phrases, formulas, and slogans that go to make up a creed in politics. They scoff at the miracles of Holy Writ, but are continually looking for the miraculous in government, or what would be miraculous if it ever happened—the conduct of a government according to business principles, or getting a day's work for a day's pay out of city employees, for example.

Most intelligent people regard as preposterous the idea that man was created supernaturally from the dust of the earth, but they see nothing ridiculous in the proposition that all men are created free and equal. They call that proposition a self-evident truth, when by all the teachings of science and history it is neither true nor self-evident. The modernist in religion wonders how anybody, in spite of astronomers and geologists, can believe that this

world was fashioned in six days of twenty-four hours each; but he himself finds no difficulty in believing that the constitution of the United States was struck off as a finished job in four months. When a teacher of civics tries to inculcate that idea, we do not call it fundamentalism; we call it sound Americanism, and the Sentinels of the Republic echo his praises.

Of course our national constitution and our whole frame of government are the product of evolution, just as man himself is; but how few people, even among the well educated, have learned to think of the body politic in dynamic terms! No, we prefer, most of us, to look upon the American democracy as something that rests upon inalienable rights and universal principles, a paragon of excellence which the rest of the world ought to copy but does not. Hence the laws, in most of the states, insist that the constitution be studied in schools and colleges with due regard for the sanctity of the text and with no taint of higher criticism, but rather in all its textual literalness—that is to say, in the same uncritical spirit that characterizes the fundamentalist approach to the first chapter of Genesis.

Let me put together, in a general way, the political creed of the average American as he expresses it

in his daily walk and conversation. It consists of a series of axioms which no one has ever proved to be axiomatic. "Government rests on the consent of the governed." "Democracy is government by the people." "The cure for the ills of democracy is more democracy." (What a strange article of faith that slogan embodies! Were I to say that the remedy for the ills of misgovernment is more misgovernment I should be saying something just as rational, but I should be giving you a poor opinion of my intelligence.) "Ours is a government of laws, not of men." "The executive and legislative branches of the government should be kept separate." "Checks and balances are essential safeguards of popular liberty." "No taxation without representation." "Direct primaries ensure the people's choice." "Self-determination and home rule." "A government is best when it governs least." "Avoid entangling alliances." "State rights." "Due process of law." "The office should seek the man, not the man the office." (The office does seek the man sometimes, but not often—about as often as a burglar goes seeking a policeman.) "The rule of public opinion." "Political parties are groups of voters who think alike and have a common program." And last, but by no means

least, "The equality of all citizens before the law."

These formulas of democracy, I believe, are accepted as gospel by the great majority of the American people. They are taken on faith by men and women who insist on rationality in religion. Yet it can readily be demonstrated that no one of them is rational without large qualifications, while some of them embody only a half truth, or no truth at all. They serve as the chief cornerstones of the American necrocracy. They have come down from earlier days, enshrined in the literature of patriotism, and so often reiterated from generation to generation that they now form a sort of biological inheritance.

In some cases the results have been detrimental to progress in politics and even to sanity in the processes of government. Take the dogma of human equality, for example. It is a very pleasing idea, this proposition that all men and women are created free and equal, and especially alluring to those who by all the tests of reality are inferior. Thomas Jefferson inherited it from John Locke, wrote it in the Declaration, and for a hundred and fifty years this egalitarian principle has colored our whole political philosophy. It has profoundly influ-

enced our constitutions, laws, and judicial administration. It was largely responsible for the series of errors which the national government made in its dealings with the South during the reconstruction era. Our homage to it is forever embalmed in the Fifteenth Amendment which by fiat of law undertook to erase all the elemental differences among men due to race, color, or previous condition of servitude.

Yet a moment's reflection will convince any one that this postulate of human equality is absolutely at variance with everything else in the range of human knowledge. Every biologist knows that men are not created equal in body; every educator knows that they are not created equal in mind. And any one who observes the course of our politics is readily made aware of the fact that all men are not equal in their influence upon government—never were so and never can be. These things are as plain as any facts of biology or history can be, yet the man who would venture to advocate a system of government based upon the demonstrable inequality of men would promptly find his teaching stigmatized as un-American, undemocratic, and a menace to our institutions. He would be investigated by the school board at the demand of the American Legion.

In the practice of American government this doctrine of human equality has done no end of harm. By its crude implications it has afforded good soil for the growth of the spoils system and the practice of rotation in office, two of the most noxious weeds in the garden of American politics. If all citizens are equally competent to govern their fellow men, why should we endeavor to choose among them on the basis of their special qualifications? If all citizens are endowed with the same political capacity, why let any one stay in office very long? Our reluctance to make use of experts in any branch of public administration is in large measure a by-product of this national obsession. The most formidable obstacle in the path of civil service reform is not the avarice of the politician. It is the deep-seated popular conviction that any able-bodied citizen, whatever his competence or lack of it, has an equal and indefeasible right to a place on the public payroll. Civil service reform is deemed by many thousands of people in this country to be undemocratic because it throws public employment open to competition, and there is nothing like an open competition to demonstrate the essential inequality of men.

Of course we have been careful not to carry the doctrine of equality too far. We do not project it

into the field of taxation, for example. Oh no, not at all! Men may be equal in their capacity to govern, but not for one moment do we hold them equal in their capacity to bear the burdens of government. When it comes to the framing of our tax laws, we adopt the exact antithesis of the leveling principle. We go on the tacit assumption that men are vastly unequal in their ability to earn and in their ability to pay. In other words, we exalt the common man so far as his share in the control of government is concerned, but when it comes to liquidating the cost of this control—well, at that point the common man seems to lose all interest in the philosophy of Jefferson and Rousseau. He is willing to concede the superiority of the few when sacrifice is involved, and asserts the natural rights of the many only when power and patronage are concerned. I am not arguing, of course, that all men should be equally taxed. I am merely pointing out that this postulate of human equality goes quickly into the discard when it conflicts with the practical necessities of government. A principle always gives way when its application conflicts with the plain interests of the governing class.

American government is deemed to be unique in that it rests on the consent of the governed. This,

of course, does not include aliens, negroes, Filipinos, or inhabitants of the District of Columbia. The consent of the governed is a synonym for the will of the majority, and the will of the majority is expressed by a plurality of those who take the trouble to vote. There is a considerable spread between the two, as the figures disclose. For example, the census of 1920 showed approximately fifty million American citizens of voting age. Of this total, only about twenty-six million voters actually went to the polls in the presidential election of the same year. The successful candidate for the presidency was said to have "swept the country," yet he received the votes of only thirty per cent of the people who were legally qualified to exercise the suffrage. Fifteen per cent of the total population gave the "consent of the governed" for all the rest! This, moreover, was an unusually good showing, in a presidential election where momentous issues were at stake. Taking our state and municipal elections and averaging them for the country as a whole, the figures show that the will of the people is regularly expressed by less than twenty per cent of our adult citizenship, or about ten per cent of the population. What Americans have in fact, therefore, is not a government by the whole people, or by a majority

of the people, or even by a majority of the registered voters, but government by a mere plurality of the politically active.

So widely, then, is this doctrine of popular consent at variance with the facts. Nor does the situation seem to be growing better. The proportion of the polled vote to the registered vote is smaller in this country to-day than it was fifty years ago. It all goes to prove what a strangely perverse creature the American citizen is. Refuse him the right to vote, and he would take up arms to wrest it from his rulers. But give this right to him freely, and he tucks it away in moth balls. He insists upon government by the whole people as a matter of principle, but as a matter of practice it does not concern him much.

This situation is not without concern to those who believe in making democracy real by compulsion, if need be. Hence the movement for imposing a penalty on those who stay away from the polls. Men and women, it is proposed, shall not only be made moral by law but patriotic by law. And was there ever a better illustration of loose thinking than that which is now being given to us by organizations which urge that when a man neglects to vote he shall forthwith be penalized by having his name stricken

off the voters' list? Thus increasing the number of votes by diminishing the number of voters!

It is clear, of course, that laws which make voting compulsory would not reach the eligible voter who neglects to register. Hence we must have compulsory registration as well. That would still leave some millions who are not eligible to register because they have failed to become naturalized. So let's make the acquisition of American citizenship compulsory, too. There is no finis to the logic of compulsion once you become involved in its meshes. Yet it ought to be plain to any one of normal mentality that ballots cast by men who know and care nothing about the candidates or the issues, but who have merely been herded and hounded to the polls—it ought to be self-evident (if anything is) that such ballots can never contribute to a more enlightened expression of the public mind.

The remedy for non-voting, as I see it, is not compulsion but the removal of those causes which contribute to electoral indifference.¹ Don't ask people

¹ The exhaustive investigation of non-voting in Chicago, made by Professors Merriam and Goswell (an investigation in which 250 party experts and 6000 non-voters were personally interviewed), brought out the fact that general indifference and inertia are responsible for more than two-fifths of all the absentees. C. E. Merriam and H. T. Goswell, *Non-Voting* (Chicago, 1924), p. 251.

to come and stand in line to be registered as voters. Send the registrars from house to house like the takers of the census. Give the citizen a right to vote either at his place of residence or at his place of business, but not at both. Hold fewer elections. Shorten the ballots and make them more intelligible. Establish a system of proportional representation in those communities where the minority can secure representation in no other way. In a word, give the voter a chance. No one of these reforms, or all of them put together, will avail to transmute electoral indifference into enthusiasm, but our whole political experience lends support to the belief that more is to be hoped from them than from any sort of legal compulsion. No more vital truth was ever uttered than that free institutions cannot long be maintained by any people who are not genuinely interested in their own government.

Meanwhile, we tell the world that public opinion rules the United States. It is the ultimate sovereign, the supreme law of the land. This is proposition number three in the decalogue of our political fundamentalism. Government by public opinion is a phrase that slips easily from the tongue and has been so oft repeated that most people believe it to embody a truth. Yet public opinion, when you

try to define it, proves to be a very elusive thing. What passes for public opinion, in perhaps the majority of cases, is simply the outcome of propaganda and counter-propaganda working upon the traditions, prejudices, aversions, or inertia of the people. The agencies of propaganda, as will be shown in a subsequent chapter of this book, were never so numerous, aggressive, or effective as they are to-day. The first inclination of most men and women, under the pressure of these indoctrinating agencies, is to connect every new problem with something already silhouetted in their own imaginations, some prejudice or point of view that has already found lodgment there. Few people, even among the more thoughtful, ever approach any new public question with open minds; or rather, they do it with minds that are open at the bottom more wide than at the top. Arguments and appeals to reason go in—and fall right out again. The stereotype remains unaltered.

Public opinion does not exude spontaneously from the cogitations of the multitude. It does not embody the rational conclusion of what psychologists call "the group mind." In large measure it is a manufactured product, prepared for the purpose of selling it to the people, and marketed to them in the

accustomed way. We are prone to forget that you can sell an idea to the people in the same way that you sell them any other commodity, from a Liberty bond to a breakfast food, and our politicians are the brokers who put through the sale. The arena of political discussion is a great stock exchange in which principles and policies are bought and sold. There are bulls and bears on the floor, crying their specialties up or down, urging the public to put their confidence in Farm Relief common, or endeavoring to pull down the market value of Volstead preferred. Our political brokers even deal in futures, and have marketed to the country a large block of that speculative stock known as "America's entry into the League of Nations," when, as, and if issued.

We speak of the referendum as an expression of the public will. But this is merely one of the pleasant self-deceptions which a democracy likes to cherish. For a referendum is at best nothing more than a call for the yeas and nays, with no opportunity for any one to voice a qualified opinion. It assumes that every voter is ready to say yes or no to any question that may be placed before him, whether it relate to the extension of a street railway franchise, the independence of the Philippines, or the pay of the police force. The unthinking voter

may be able to do this, but the thoughtful man or woman, when confronted with an issue of public policy, is rarely able to express his true opinion by the simple expedient of marking a cross on a slip of paper; and this is particularly true when the question carries various implications, as referendum questions so often do. In such cases the referendum merely gives the voter a choice between two alternatives, neither of which he may desire, and to that extent it becomes an agency for eliminating the greater of two evils by forcing the people to choose the less. Small wonder it is that under such conditions the voice of the people turns out to be a babel of discordance like unto that which was heard on the plain of Shinar when men sought to build a city whose tower would spike the sky. *Vox populi, vox Dei*, it is said. For myself, if I thought that the voice of the people was the voice of God I should be sorely tempted to become an atheist.

No, the justification of elections, referenda, and majority rule is not the wisdom of the multitude, much less its omniscience, but the pressing necessity of devising some crude makeshift whereby decisions can be reached which the people will accept. In other words, democracy is a form of government that goes through the gestures of obeisance to pop-

ular sovereignty. A presidential election is merely our modern and highly refined substitute for the ancient revolution; a mobilization of opposing forces, a battle of the ins against the outs; with leaders and strategy and campaign chests and all the other paraphernalia of civil war, but without bodily violence to the warriors. This refinement of the struggle for political control, this transition from bullets to ballots, is perhaps the greatest contribution of modern times to the progress of civilization.

Among the threadbare formulas, slogans, shibboleths, and creedal phrases which have influenced the course of American government, especially in the realm of foreign relations, none has done more effective service than Washington's traditional admonition to *avoid entangling alliances*. The Father of his Country said it, we are told, and having said it, our intercourse with other countries must be eternally fashioned by this commandment of negation from Sinai on the Potomac. As a matter of fact, Washington did not say it. He never used the phrase "entangling alliances" in any of his speeches or writings, so far as I can discover, and certainly did not use it in his Farewell Message. Here are his essential words of admonition:

Observe good faith and justice toward all nations. Cultivate peace and harmony with all. Europe has a set of primary interests to which we have none, or a very remote, relation. Hence she must be engaged in frequent controversies the causes of which are essentially foreign to our concerns. Hence, therefore, it must be unwise in us to implicate ourselves, by artificial ties, in the ordinary vicissitudes of her politics or the ordinary combinations and collisions of her friendships or enmities. Taking care always to keep ourselves, by suitable establishments, on a respectable defensive posture, we may safely trust to temporary alliances for extraordinary emergencies.

You will notice that Washington was cautious in the language he used. "In the *ordinary* vicissitudes" of European politics, he says, we should not implicate ourselves, or "in the *ordinary* combinations and collisions of her friendships or enmities." There is no warning here against concerning ourselves with the *extraordinary* vicissitudes of the Old Continent—and in the past ten years they have been extraordinary to an unparalleled degree.

How vastly different, moreover, is the present world situation from that to which Washington addressed himself in his words of official adieu! Europe was then remote; she is nearer to us to-day than Cuba was in Washington's time. She is our chief foreign market and must be for decades to come. Our trade with Europe totals ten billions a

year. When Europe declines in purchasing power, you can hear the American farmer bellow all the way from Duluth to Dodge City. Through public and private loans we hold European obligations amounting to twenty billions, which is more than the entire wealth of the country in Washington's day. He was addressing a weak, friendless, almost bankrupt fringe of seaboard, with virtually no foreign trade and with numerous home problems of the greatest urgency pressing for solution. Would he have similarly cautioned a mighty power which holds in its hands the destinies of civilization? It is hard to believe that he would.

This is not set forth as an argument for any change in American foreign policy. I am not urging alliances or covenants, whether open or closed, whether entangling or otherwise, with any European country. The greatest of American interests is peace. Most of the time, therefore, and perhaps all of the time, a sound case can be made against implicating ourselves in the affairs of other countries, either beyond the Atlantic or beyond the Caribbean. But let the case be made by argument, not by the trumpeting of some pontifical phrase. Let our appeal be to the sense of living men and not to the catacombs.

We come to the fifth commandment: "Ours must be a government of laws, not of men." Free people must be subject only to laws of their own making, and never to the discretionary power of officials, whether elective or appointive, for official discretion is the essence of tyranny. So, indeed, it was written by the Fathers in the *Federalist*.

But no government ever has been or ever can be a government of laws alone. Laws are inanimate things. They have no motion of their own. Like clocks, they go from the motion that men give them. They must be interpreted, applied, and enforced by human agencies. Hence every government must be to a large extent a government of men, no matter what our delusions to the contrary may be. And the more complicated our civilization becomes, the more essential it is to widen the range of administrative discretion and to have a government of men. This broadening has been going on at a rapid rate in all branches of American government during the past few decades and the end is not yet. We have, in fact, departed far from the old order.

Our tenacious belief in a government of laws has had one obvious result. It has resulted in an outpouring of laws the like of which the world has never seen elsewhere. There are various estimates

of the total number of laws and ordinances now operative in the United States, but these estimates are mere guesswork, because nobody has ever attempted to count them all. We do know, however, that there are now on the statute books of the nation and the states no fewer than twenty thousand laws relating to the railroads alone.

Our federal and state laws are increasing at the rate of about ten thousand a year. Let us hope that there is no truth in the axiom which Machiavelli quotes from Tacitus, to wit: "the worse the state, the more abundant the laws." For it takes no fewer than one hundred and twenty-five printed volumes to hold our biennial output of statutes, not to speak of almost as many more to contain the decisions of the courts interpreting these statutes. Think of the New York policeman who carries in his pockets a list of the sixteen thousand ordinances which he is expected to enforce. Your answer is that he does not enforce five per cent of them, and you are right. He is merely the sauntering symbol of our helplessness in dealing with the problems which life in a great urban community brings with it.

The zeal of the American democracy for the making of laws has been matched by a lack of success in enforcing them. That is not surprising, for

the average citizen has only a limited amount of time and thought for public affairs. If he bestows it on the task of getting laws made, he has none left for the much more difficult job of seeing that they are enforced. Our people keep a far closer watch on legislatures and city councils than on police courts and district attorney's offices and parole boards. The consequence is that a large part of the energy expended in lawmaking goes for naught. Much has been written upon the ways of securing a better enforcement of the laws of the land. But the first essential step in that direction must be a reorientation in the mind of the ordinary citizen. He must be brought to realize that when a law is passed, the job is only half done, or less than half done. He must be induced to think in terms of a government of men. Until he does this, all other remedies for laxity in law enforcement will carry him but a little way.

"A government is best when it governs least." This epigram, coined by Thomas Jefferson, has been a great solace to the apostles of *laissez-faire* during the past ten decades. Time and circumstance have sapped its strength, yet even to-day there are millions who react instinctively against any expansion in the functions of the public authorities. They

would make of the land a great Valley of Tophet wherein to burn the rational yearnings of their sons as a continuing sacrifice to an idolatrous precept. It is perfectly plain to any rational mind, of course, that there can be no evaluation of a government's helpfulness in terms of quantity alone. Not how much or how little a government does, but how well it does what it undertakes to do—with governments as with men, that is the only fair criterion.

There is nothing that a government should not do, if it can do the thing better than it would otherwise be done. That is a self-evident corollary from the avowed purpose of American government, which is "to establish justice, insure domestic tranquillity, provide for the common defence, promote the general welfare, and secure the blessings of liberty." How can such ends be achieved if a government goes on the principle that inaction and avoidance are to serve as its chart and compass? The philosophy of governmental self-detraction has long since gone out of tune with the realities of the world in which we live.

Like all wise men, Jefferson said and wrote a few foolish things. His mind was at times a busy mint of counterfeit verities. Unhappily, it is these that seem to have the greatest longevity. We hear very

seldom, nowadays, the wisest thing that Jefferson ever said; namely, that the government of the United States should always "belong to the living generation," and not to generations that are past and gone. This idea, of course, was not original with the great Virginian. He got it from his mentor in the philosophy of revolution, Tom Paine. "Every generation is, and must be, competent to all the purposes which its occasions require," wrote Paine in his *Rights of Man*. "The vanity and presumption of governing beyond the grave is the most ridiculous and insolent of all tyrannies. It is the living and not the dead that are to be accommodated. When a man ceases to be, his power and his wants cease with him; and having no longer any participation in the concerns of this world, he has no longer any authority in directing how its government shall be organized or how administered."

That would seem to be both right and reasonable. The constitution of the United States, the laws of the land, the jurisdiction of the courts, and the policy of the government, they belong to you and me, not to the saints who from their labors rest. It is for us, the living generation, to decide what we want and how to get it. This ought to be the most elementary commonplace of popular govern-

ment, but it is not. If you have doubts, just take a hand in any discussion of proposals to amend the national constitution and see how quickly some of these imposter phrases, far out of touch with the rational impulses of modern America, will stalk ghostlike upon the scene.

There is no need to multiply illustrations, but one more may well be given. *"I do not know much about the tariff, but I know this much—when we buy manufactured goods abroad, we get the goods and the foreigner gets the money. When we buy manufactured goods at home, we get both the goods and the money."* This economic claptrap has been widely attributed to Abraham Lincoln, although there is no evidence that he ever uttered it. As a slogan for protectionist propaganda, it has been as manna from on high. It has become invested with the halo of an honored name. And it has a fine, plausible ring of simple sense and finality.

Yet the assertion, as it stands, is true in no sense whatever. When we buy goods abroad, the foreigner does not get our money. He gets goods from us in trade. If we stop buying from him, we stop selling to him. Imports are paid for by exports, to a very large extent. Each individual transaction is expressed in terms of money, but in their totality

the two currents of trade offset and very little money flows either way. No principle of international trade and finance is better established than this: it ought to be within the comprehension of every citizen. But if you engage in any controversy on tariff problems, as Congress feels that it must do from time to time, you will find that the tycoon syllogism is still doing business.

And so one might go on to the last verse of our political Pentateuch. With words we try to govern men—with words, too often, instead of ideas. Surely there is no one among the Fathers who would thank us for all this bondage to the past; this twisting and even reversing of their words. It is no disrespect to Washington that we have built up strong political parties, although he detested them most earnestly and in his farewell address solemnly warned his countrymen against “the baleful effects of the spirit of party.” It is no aspersion on the wisdom of old Ben Franklin that we prefer to make electricity in power houses rather than to haul it down from the heavens with a kite. What boots it, after all, that Jackson believed in the spoils system, or that Grover Cleveland once found himself confronted by a condition, not a theory? By whom was it ordained that political

opinion must descend in accordance with the principles of divine right or the law of primogeniture? "Our forefathers, men of the same race, have long possessed this land," declaimed Pericles, "and by their virtue they have handed it down to us free." That is fine oratory; but the forefathers of a people can never *keep* posterity free. They can establish a system of free government, but it is beyond their power to maintain that vigilance which is the price of both liberty and progress. "Freedom is re-created year by year," as James Russell Lowell once said:

We are not free: doth Freedom, then, consist
 In musing with our faces toward the Past,
 While petty cares and crawling interests twist
 Their spider-threads about us, which at last
 Grow strong as iron chains, to cramp and bind
 In formal narrowness heart, soul, and mind?
 Freedom is recreated year by year,
 In hearts wide open on the Godward side,
 In souls calm-cadenced as the whirling sphere,
 In minds that sway the future like a tide.

Still, we are making some progress. The heart of America is opening somewhat more widely on the Godward side. We are becoming less deferential to the platitudes than we used to be. A generation ago there was hardly any one bold enough

to question the time-hallowed doctrine of checks and balances in government. It was regarded as the shield and buckler of all true democracy. To-day it is not only assailed from many quarters, but in the field of municipal government it is being widely abandoned. The marvel to me is that any race of men in their senses should have chosen this extraordinary principle as one on which to base their government.

Some years ago I took a walking trip through southern Ireland. I noticed a good many goats in the fields, but always in pairs, tied to each other. Wondering why this should be the case, I asked an Irish farmer the reason. He was amazed at my lack of sophistication in animal husbandry.

"They're tied to each other so that they won't wander away," he said.

"But I don't see the point," was my reply. "Why can't two goats wander away as well as one?"

"They can't and they won't," he said with true Hibernian emphasis, "for one goat will never go where the other wants to go, and the result is they just stay around where they are."

Then, for the first time, there dawned on me the psychological basis of the principle of checks and balances in government. Just hitch the executive and legislative branches of your government together

in such a way that the one can never go anywhere without the other, and you may safely count upon both staying just where they are. Surely it is no marvel that the war-torn countries of Europe, in their quest for a form of government which would restore prosperity and facilitate progress, should have felt disinclined to base their political reconstructions on such a principle as this.

Let it not be imagined, however, from what has been written in these pages, that slogans and formulas which embody the national traditions have no value and perform no useful service. On the contrary, their value and their service are both considerable. They tend to make public action instinctive, and instinct is by no means an errant guide at all times. They give stability to political institutions. They form the ballast in the ship of state and help her keep the course when she heels over to the winds of mass-resentment or desire. But there is a difference between ballast and barnacles. Good seamanship requires the scraping of the hull from time to time. Or, to drop the nautical metaphor, it is only by renewing the foundations of the commonwealth that the permanence of a government can be assured. To be safe, a government must rest on a creed that is not too far removed from rationality.

CHAPTER II

THE MYTH OF POPULAR SOVEREIGNTY

"Democracy is a form of government in which the people rule."
—*Herodotus*, Book vi, ch. 43.

THIS is one of the earliest, the simplest, and the worst definitions of democracy ever framed. Yet it is the one most widely accepted. Everywhere the people take it for granted that they are, or ought to be, the immediate masters of their own political destiny. This omnipotence is implied in the current terminology of popular government—in such expressions as the rule of public opinion, the consent of the governed, and the choice of the people. In a word, the definition assumes that the form and the spirit of government are matters of human plan or program, subject to no forces which are beyond the power of the electorate to control. When free people do not like their government in any of its phases or operations, it is their right, it is their duty, to change it.

With this theory of the determinism of human whimsicality in politics I venture to take issue. It

does not seem to square with the facts of our political life, either past or present. Man's unfettered discretion is not the sole dictator of political evolution. Glance for a moment at the great governments of the world to-day. During the past six years all of them have moved in the same direction; that is, to the Right, to conservatism, to an emphasis on order, normalcy, and economy. Mussolini in Italy, Riviera in Spain, Pilsudski in Poland, Hindenburg in Germany, Poincaré in France, Baldwin in England and Coolidge in Washington—they alike prefigure, although in different degrees, a unison in the political temper of both Europe and America that would hardly be conceivable were there not some sort of predestination controlling it all. I mean political, not Calvinistic, predestination. Should men of scientific mentality rest satisfied with the explanation that this extraordinary political phenomenon, so exactly synchronized over so much of the earth's surface despite great differences in geographical environment, in race, and in political traditions,—that this extraordinary phenomenon is merely the outcome of uncoördinated and capricious volition on the part of the half dozen nations concerned? Does it not rather appear, on the face of things, that what we call "the will of the people"

in all these countries has been subjected to some world-wide constraining influence, and that popular sovereignty has become the obedient creature of time and circumstance?

Human discretion, in matters of government, is not a thing that runs untrammelled. It is motivated by a variety of forces which the average citizen neither sees nor understands. Men insist upon being free; but what they secure by political freedom is the opportunity for certain fundamental laws and forces to work freely, without factious obstruction on the part of human agencies. To define democracy as a form of government in which the people rule is to give only half a definition. It is a form of government in which the door is thrown open for the free play of powerful deterministic factors of a physical or psychological character, acting through the intermediary of the popular will. The more democratic a government, the more effective is the influence exerted upon it by these underlying forces.

Any careful student of history, therefore, could have predicted the present tide in the affairs of men. Every great war in history has been followed by a similar phenomenon, to the extent that the people have been in partial control of their govern-

ment. Every great war in the future is likely to be. In a democracy it can be laid down as a fundamental law of politics that conservatism will emerge from war as the victor, and liberalism as the vanquished. It is so foreordained from the first skirmish. Most liberals are inclined to be pacifists and it is logical that they should be. Their cause is an inevitable casualty of war. From liberalism's point of view, the chief objection to war is what comes after it. For the liberals in politics there can be no peace with victory.

Popular sovereignty has never availed to keep a people from obeying the inexorable laws which control the general course of their political progress. I use the word laws with malice aforethought. There must be laws of politics, for laws are the most universal of all phenomena. Everything in nature inclines to move in seasons, or in undulations, or in cycles. Light, heat, sound, and ether come to us in waves; seedtime and harvest, rainfall and drought come and pass with the seasons; while prosperity and depression, conservatism and radicalism, courage and caution, follow each other with fairly measurable regularity. We see the more or less regular sequence of revolution, reaction, normalcy, liberalism, radicalism; and then revolution again—the

cycle completed, or the huge spiral climbed another round. It may take but a decade in Latin America, a generation in the countries of Continental Europe, a century in Great Britain or the United States. Does it prefigure the political omnipotence of man? Are we to believe that there are no forces controlling the course of public affairs in a world which is everywhere else controlled? Shall we continue to say that man as a political agent is born free and becomes sovereign, because we have not yet uncovered the laws of politics which he consistently obeys? Science has been a discoverer of laws, and political science ought to be.

Age and reiteration do not make truth out of falsehood. We have biblical assurance that "the wind bloweth where it listeth" and for centuries mankind believed it, but the meteorologist of to-day knows that the wind does nothing of the sort. He has proved to his own satisfaction that the wind bloweth from a high-pressure to a low-pressure area, always and everywhere. It obeys a natural law. Once upon a time it was the universal belief that epidemics of pestilence were scourges sent by the gods; to-day we set health experts to find the major routes of infection. May it not be, likewise, that the political moods and temper and actions of the

people are similarly molded and controlled by discoverable laws which have thus far escaped our attention because our study of politics has been so largely empirical? It is a significant fact that we know infinitely more about the causes of disease than we do about the causative factors in crime, political corruption, bossism, or abstention from the polls. Perhaps it is because scientists have been studying the one and sociologists the other. At any rate, "the normal forces that govern the ordinary conduct of men in their public relations have scarcely received any scientific treatment at all."¹ That situation should not continue. By utilizing the right technique, by adopting both the methodology and the objectivity of the scientist, there would seem to be no good reason why some of the normally controlling forces in political, as in natural, phenomena may not be brought into better visibility.

Let me use an analogy. Suppose I were to take a thousand boulders of varying sizes and drop them simultaneously here and there at irregular intervals into a small body of water, there would presently be a thousand circular waves of varying size, moving with all degrees of rapidity and quickly intersect-

¹ A. Lawrence Lowell, *The Government of England*, Vol. I, p. 449.

ing. These waves would in cases intensify, in other cases they would neutralize, one another. What a job it would be to work out, with mathematical precision, the course and strength of them all—but, given the complete data, it could be done! And so it would seem to be with the ever ruffled pool of modern politics; every action of the government, every vibration in the economic structure, every crop failure or bank failure, every local twist or turn in public activity sets a big or a little wave in motion, with effects which are mutually intensifying or neutralizing, but which, if all data were at hand, do not seem beyond the power of human skill to evaluate.

Yet the political scientist contents himself with the assurance that it cannot be done because of the "human equation" which is involved. That is surprising, for human nature, after all, is a relatively stabilized and dependable thing. Were it not so, our social order would be without permanence. There is an underlying consistency in human conduct, as every psychologist knows, and the evidences of this consistency are to be found in the annals of all nations, recurring age after age. Men in the mass everywhere respond to the same passions and desires in much the same way. "They are stirred by the same motives," says Lord Bryce, "and think upon

similar lines." They prefer autocracy and order to liberty and chaos—at least most of the time and in most countries.

It is doubtless true that predictions can never be mathematically certain in politics, as in physics, because even the "constants" of human nature are to an extent modifiable by experience and by environmental influences. Nevertheless it is reasonable to believe that such predictions can be given a greater measure of probability than they now possess. The weather seems to have strange vagaries (especially in New England), yet we have a science of meteorology. In politics the action of one voter may be doubtful, but the action of a hundred thousand, when all are subjected at the same time to the pressure of the same passions and desires—it would be much less doubtful. To build up a science of human behavior in relation to public affairs does not seem *prima facie* impossible. To this end the student of politics ought to seek his methodological affiliation with the natural scientist rather than the philosopher and the sociologist, whose company he has habitually been keeping to the detriment of his own quest for truth.

One of the laws of politics which popular sovereignty must obey is the law of geographic determin-

ism. The government and politics of a country are controlled, to a much larger extent than the ordinary man suspects, by considerations of geography which are but slightly within his power to alter. Forty years ago the most acute political observer of his generation, James Bryce, urged the more intensive study of geography as a means of clarifying the causative factors in governmental differentiation, but the response to this counsel has not been significant. Our knowledge of the relation between geography and government has undergone relatively little advance since Buckle wrote his stimulating *History of Civilization in England*. Yet it is a commonplace of observation that the three countries which have preserved and developed a democratic scheme of government over the longest period of time—Great Britain, Switzerland, and the United States—are all of them countries to which geography has given a certain measure of isolation; in other words, a natural means of defence against assault, and by so doing has obviated the need for great military establishments. Seas and mountains, therefore, have had much to do with the preservation and growth of free governments. Fertile plains and broad valleys, without such natural barriers, have fallen an easy prey to despotism. Any diminution in the

menace of war favors the upbuilding of democratic traditions. President Wilson was quite justified in vouchsafing the hope that the world could be made safer for democracy by eliminating the threat of war. Not being able to change the geography of a continent in the interests of national security, he turned to international guarantees as the most practicable substitute.

Geographic determinism has been and still is a factor of great importance in American political evolution. Geography helped to drive the French from North America, for the area held by the thirteen colonies was eminently suitable for compact settlement, enclosed by a natural wall of forested mountains and hence easy to defend; while the French tried to hold a long and sinuous line all the way from the St. Lawrence to the Gulf of Mexico. It ran through a low watershed, open to assault at every point. Geography fought with the Continentals in the Revolutionary War, inasmuch as it gave them the interior lines of communication. The inexorable demands of geography compelled the calling of the Constitutional Convention in 1787; the compromises which marked its work were dictated by the need for reconciling diverse interests based on geography. And the contest for ratification resolved

itself into a line-up of seacoast against hinterland.

Geography was in part responsible for the impassioned character of American politics during the tremulous thirties, and it bulked large, as every one knows, in causing the economic crevasse between North and South, two decades later. All the handiwork of Clays and other compromisers did not avail to prevent the ultimate clash of two great regions which nature had differently endowed. After the Civil War, geography once more served as a basis on which to re-align political parties, and sectionalism remains a big factor in American politics at the present day. So the student of American government should keep one eye on the map at all times. He should remember that not people alone, but land and people, make a nation.

Geography creates political problems and often determines the manner of their ultimate solution. It figures in almost every national issue. No one can form an intelligent judgment on any phase of American politics, past or present, without taking into account the diverse interests, ambitions, and propensities of North and South, of East and West, of inland and seaboard — a discongruity which became inevitable when the world's foundations

first were laid. No one can understand the deliberations of Congress or of the national party conventions without bearing in mind that the outcome in nearly every instance is a treaty of compromise between great sections of half a continent.

Racial determinism is of almost equal importance. Some races have more political genius than others. It is, therefore, possible for them to pursue a course of political evolution which would be quite out of the question in the case of a people less happily endowed. To be sure, no race of men on earth believes itself inferior in political genius to any other, yet the disparity among them is as self-evident as any social fact can be. It is by reason of this dissimilitude that political institutions, when they are transplanted, so often wither and die. It is worth noting, moreover, that people of the same race, when set in different environments, develop some diversity in political traits — Englishmen at home and in Australia, Dutchmen in Holland and in South Africa, even Easterners in the American West. The Westerner, it is said, is merely an Easterner with new experiences; but new experiences often make a new man.

The determinism of racial heritage is a factor

which all intelligent students of comparative politics take into their reckonings. It is one of the great clues to the interpretation of political tendencies, yet it remains for the most part a virgin field of scientific research. We do not know much about the interaction of geographic and racial factors in the life of a people; we cannot yet measure the degree to which either of them, or both in their reciprocal relation, affect the form or the temper of a government. Would England have become the Mother of Parliaments had this sceptered isle been conquered by Ethiopians and Moors rather than by Saxons and Normans? Why are there such striking differences in the political evolution of North and South America? It is not altogether by reason of geography, for the two continents have great physical similarities, and of the two, South America has the greater isolation from Europe. Obviously it is racial determinism that explains, in large measure, the higher and more stable plane upon which the political system of the northern continent has moved. Every race has its qualities and the defects of its qualities. Every race has its virtues, and its lack of them as well. From the interaction of race and geography people derive both their mental habits and their vocational pro-

clivities. These become the foundations of their politics.

The truth is both elementary and self-evident that systems of government depend, for their success or failure, not upon the relative prudence with which popular sovereignty is voluntarily exercised by the people, but to a considerable extent upon qualities and conditions which they do not create but only obey. The art of government is far more than a matter ruled by intellect. To deem it so is an error that everyone but the politician is inclined to make.

This relativity of institutions to a traditional environment, geographic and racial, is what gives a certain measure of continuity to politics. Were our political mechanism and methods wholly dependent upon the preferences, whims, or caprice of each generation, popular government would be self-destructive. To guarantee the continuity of a government there must be traditions. Democracy is made orderly and safe by the fact that every political institution and every administrative method is an outgrowth of something earlier. It represents an improvement, a simplification, a reaction. We build things that are new upon a foundation of things that are old. After all, it is amazing how few political institutions have ever been spontaneously created,

and on the other hand how few have completely perished from the earth. Monarchs, ministries, orders of nobility, parliaments and councils in various forms, mayors and aldermen, judges and magistrates, assessors and tax gatherers, even rings and bosses and grafters, have been with us for a thousand years. The great medieval institution of feudalism is said to have vanished; but I am not so sure of that. It has changed its form to suit the needs of an industrialized age and a monetary economy, but the great central principle of feudalism—the principle that he who holds property holds a public trust and should render service—that principle has assuredly not disappeared. There is scarcely a single political institution in the United States to-day which did not exist, either in full form or in embryo, long before America was discovered. What we have done is to revamp and refurbish old ideas and methods, altering and adapting them to the needs of a new environment.

We say that Jefferson wrote the Declaration of Independence and that the ideas were his; that Hamilton originated the protective tariff; that Jackson introduced the spoils system, and that Volstead made the country dry. This is only because we insist on having some personality on which to hang,

as on a peg, our facile conceptions of origins. But in truth the philosophy of the Declaration is as old as Spartacus; there were protective tariffs in ancient Athens; the spoils system prevailed in Joseph's Egypt, and Mohammed was a precursor of Volstead by several centuries. Even such reputedly new things as the recall of governors, the excess profits tax, limitations upon the height of buildings, over-expenditure in election campaigns, and the problem of traffic congestion on the city streets—every one of them was an old story in ancient Rome. It may be the "right" of a sovereign people to change their government at will, but it is rarely within their power to break its moral continuity.

The sovereignty of the people is assumed to manifest itself in the rule of the majority, but this assumption collides with another law of politics, to wit, the inevitable inclination of all governments to autocracy. Every government, whatsoever its form and howsoever safeguarded, tends to become a government by minority. The attempt has often been made to fasten political power in the hands of the whole people, but it never stays there. It gravitates into the possession of a class—a ruling class. This may be a class based upon birth, or on wealth, or on military control. More commonly, nowadays, it

is an autocracy of the politicians. Nothing, indeed, is more impressive in all human history than the relative ease with which, under any and every form of government, the classes have managed to strip from the masses the substance of power while leaving them the outward forms of it. They take the cash and let the credit go. It must inevitably turn out that way. The closer we get to government by the multitude, the nearer we get to chaos. A government in which every citizen assumed an equal share would not be a government at all. It would be an affair without leadership, without initiative, without concentration of responsibility—the very negation of government. The principle of political equality, when pressed to its logical conclusion, carries us straight to anarchy.

With all due respect to Gettysburg rhetoric, therefore, no government of, by, and for the whole people has ever existed anywhere on this earth for any length of time. It is the essence of all government that the Few shall lead and the Many follow. This is particularly the case in our unbelievably complex modern society, where not one citizen in a hundred can spare the time and thought which are essential to an understanding of the problems of government. The Few must be given authority to make their

leadership effective, and their inevitable aptitude will be to widen this authority, to arrogate it permanently, to free themselves from direct control. The great problem of democracy is not to prevent the drift of power into the hands of a governing class, but to make sure that this class is wisely chosen and held to a strict popular accountability. A failure to recognize this practical limitation upon the processes of popular sovereignty has been at the root of many political disillusionments.

For example, we have sought to guard against irresponsible government, to enforce the responsibility of the Few, by elaborating our electoral mechanism with petitions, primaries, referenda, recalls, vetoes, and divisions of power. Unhappily, by such devices the process of government is made so intricate and complex that the ordinary voter has no recourse but to enlist the services of a professional politician as his guide. In other words, we have made the average citizen dependent upon the very people whose activities these devices were intended to control. We shall have to find some other way of insuring official good conduct and responsibility. Simplification, not a further elaboration, of our electoral machinery is what we need. It is only by creating a short-circuit between the voter and his

representative that we can hope to prevent, in a nation so great as ours, the relentless drift of power into fewer and still fewer hands.

The doctrine of popular sovereignty encounters still another practical difficulty in the softening influence of responsibility upon rulership. In politics there is always a hiatus between promise and performance, between profession and practice, between what the people vote for and what they get. For it may be set down as an axiom of political science that those who receive a popular mandate forthwith begin to attenuate their pre-election program. This is true of leaders and party organizations alike. A conservative party, when it comes into power, mellows its conservatism. It turns out to be less reactionary than was feared. It becomes, in many respects, more liberal than its opponents thought possible. A radical party, on the other hand, tends to become more conservative when burdened with the obligations of power. Responsibility has a sobering effect upon all men. No sooner is any government installed in office than it begins to whimper that there are practical difficulties in the way of doing what it promised to do; that the time is not ripe for putting its whole program into operation; and that while the mandate of the people must

not be disobeyed, there are the best of reasons for reluctantly evading it. Thus we have seen socialist governments go into office in France, Germany, Belgium, and other European countries; yet it is a matter of history that these socialist governments, in spite of their militant political creed, have not done things very differently from other governments.

It is not surprising that this should be the case. Men in public office find themselves confronted by conditions, not by theories. Theories of government may be changed overnight, but the conditions with which a government must deal cannot be thus quickly altered. There is no logic so convincing as the logic of facts. Problems of public policy do not lose any of their inherent toughness by the mere advent of a new administration. There is rarely much choice among solutions that are practicable.

Every one has observed, for example, how much easier it is to inveigh against an existing constitution, law or administrative method than to provide a workable substitute. Recall, for example, how the Republicans condemned the enactment of the Adamson Law in 1916, denouncing it as the abject surrender of Congress to the railway brotherhoods. Yet the same Republicans, when they came into power, did not change a single letter of this law.

There are always the best of excuses for the non-fulfillment of party promises, whether they relate to the tariff, or the tax laws, or the relief of an agricultural depression. "Some phases of the situation have changed." "We must proceed in an orderly way." "The business of the country must not be needlessly disturbed." Every newly installed administration is more prolific in alibis than in action. That situation is not the result of man's perversity; it inheres in the very nature of politics.

Hence it is that although rival parties may set before the electorate the most antithetical programs, there is no revolution or anything approaching a revolution when one of them replaces the other in office. And indeed it is essential that there should be this fundamental stability, for no scheme of government would be tolerable if it permitted, much less encouraged, sharp reversals of policy after every election. People are willing to shift their allegiance from one party to another and to look with equanimity upon changes of presidents or ministries because they have long since learned that no great eruption is going to occur. Popular sovereignty is thus made safe by drawing the teeth out of it.

There is one resemblance between the Voice of the People and the Voice of God. The ways of

both are inscrutable. Both have the Old Testament tone of reproof and reprimand. It is an elementary principle of practical politics that the sovereign populace usually votes its resentment, not its appreciation. As a rule, the average citizen does not vote *for* anything, but *against* something. He keeps a one-sided account with his rulers and representatives. His ledger has a debit side only—with no credit side. He makes a mental entry of anything that encounters his disapproval; but what pleases him he takes for granted and simply dismisses from his mind. If taxes go up, he remembers it; if they go down, he forgets. On the face of things one might imagine it good politics to offend forty per cent of the voters if such action were assured of approval from the remaining sixty per cent. But the seasoned campaigner knows that this is the mathematics of a simpleton in politics. He has no patience with a quantitative theory of votes and voting. Ballots are counted equally, no doubt; but not all voters are equally susceptible to the same motives in casting their ballots. A mayor who denies an increase of pay to the city employees may by that action bitterly offend ten per cent of the electorate while gaining the approval of the other nine-tenths. But does any one imagine that this mayor, when he

comes up for reëlection, will profit at the polls by a ratio of nine to one? No, the great majority of the voters who have been pleased by the mayor's action will forget all about it long before the next election comes around. They are quite mildly moved by motives of gratitude, or not moved at all. But the small minority of employees who were grievously disappointed and embittered by the mayor's insistence on economy,—they have long memories. They and their relatives and their friends will appear at the polls one hundred per cent strong and they will register their resentment to a man. Two and two do not make four in politics. Majority sentiment does not necessarily rule. Popular mandates are often bestowed by minorities. Elections are determined, not by the opinions of the whole people but by the preponderating sentiment of those who go to the polls. And this is largely dependent upon the intensity of the feeling that has been created among certain sections of the electorate.

Thus it comes to pass that an administration which honestly tries to promote the greatest good of the greatest number is predestined to weaken its hold upon the people and ultimately throw itself out of power. Utilitarianism, the greatest good of the greatest number, is a sound enough ideal in political

philosophy, but in practical politics it beckons along the path to disaster. The rulers in a democracy preserve their hold upon power by the scrupulous avoidance of all vociferous antagonisms—even if the best interests of a meek and taciturn majority must inevitably suffer thereby. The meek may inherit the earth, as one of the beatitudes assures us; but this inheritance will not be secured by them at the polls in a democratic commonwealth. Meanwhile it is enough to note the fact, quite discernible without a microscope, that an administration with a negative record often proves stronger at the polls than one which has been active, positive, and constructive.

Yet human ambition has a beneficent cast. The populace desires good government. No people ever consciously chose to be misgoverned. But they may be hornswoggled into making that choice, and many a time they have been. The process is made easier for demagogues by reason of the fact that Efficiency and Democracy are not what you would call a Damon and Pythias. Most of the world is now clamoring to be pulled out of the mire by both, yet it is a law of politics (if ever there was one) that these two ideals cannot be simultaneously achieved in the same scheme of government. Democracy

purports to be a plan of government by all the people, while efficiency requires that the government shall be for the people, but not by them. Democracy is a non-professional plan of government and, as Woodrow Wilson once said, "in many great matters of public action, non-professionalism is non-efficiency."

The world has been slow to learn that democracy is neither a cheap nor an efficient form of government. It is, on the contrary, the most expensive. Almost invariably it prefers the most costly and least efficient ways of doing things. Hence it is a luxury that only rich, prosperous and secure nations can afford. It is a craft designed for fair weather and smooth seas. Never did the people of the United States show themselves more oblivious to all the lessons of political history than when they allowed themselves to hope and believe that the shell-shocked countries of Europe would find an immediate exit from chaos by injecting more democracy into their governments—by putting their faith in universal suffrage, ministerial responsibility, the initiative and referendum, consent of the governed, and municipal home rule. Democracy has gone into temporary eclipse because Europe needs, above all other things, retrenchment, rehabilitation, and a

return to normalcy. Popular sovereignty, in countries like Italy, Spain, Poland, and Russia has gone where the ground hog goes. With the lapse of time it will doubtless emerge once more, at least as a theory of government; but its translation into a reality will depend, in no small degree, upon the amount of security that has been established against the menace of war. As a means of removing government from the control of the people, war and rumors of war are the most dependable instrumentalities that man's ingenuity has ever devised.

From two points of view, accordingly, the future of democracy is somewhat clouded. In the first place, national insecurity has not yet been eliminated. So long as it remains, it will menace the orderly growth of free government. And in the second place, the functions of government are being steadily widened in all countries. Government is reaching, more and more, into fields of industry, human relations, and social welfare. Inevitably, there is a demand that the work of government in these fields shall be well and economically performed, yet it is plain as a pikestaff that efficiency can only be attained by the sacrifice of many practices which we have long associated with the democratic form of rulership. It can only be achieved by imposing restraint

upon the free, frequent, and direct action of the electorate in ordering the course of administration. In the exercise of its non-political functions, such as the regulation of business and the conduct of foreign relations, a government cannot be efficient unless it possesses both poise and tolerance; yet it can possess neither of these qualities if its actions are at all times subject to the capricious influence of an assorted populace. Sooner or later, in all governments, democracy and efficiency obtain a divorce for incompatibility of temper. Efficiency may prevail and democracy be sent adrift, as was the case in German cities before the war. Or democracy may be given the right of way and efficiency sacrificed, as has been the case in most of our American cities. The attempt to combine both in full measure has often been made, but it has nowhere succeeded. Some day we will recognize the essential incompatibility and cease our striving.

That new orientation in politics may come sooner than we realize. Of old it took generations, even centuries, for nations to change their point of view from one extreme to another. But in modern times the tempo of history has been speeded up. It has been changed from *andante* to *vivace*. The biologists tell us that the pre-natal and early post-natal

growth of a child rehearses in a few months the entire evolution of the human race through thousands of years. The course of progress passes in a few days, or in a few weeks, through stages which cost primitive man the travail of a whole millennium.

So it seems to be in our political evolution. Transitions which, in earlier history, took a long time are now concentrated within the memory of a living individual. The action and reaction of social forces are more closely spaced and the cycle is more quickly run. Man is still the creature of natural forces, traditions, and psychological traits which make him a much less sovereign entity in politics than he commonly assumes himself to be, but the progress of his emancipation is likely to be more rapid in the future than it has been in the past.

CHAPTER III

THE LAW OF THE PENDULUM

"Before the sea of human opinion, as on the shore of the ocean, I admire the ebb and flow. Who shall discover its law?"
—*Sainte-Beuve.*

IT is a commonplace that human opinion serves as the controlling force in a democracy. By the grace of it one government goes in and another goes out. Who shall discover its law? The truth is that we have put far too little diligence into the attempt to discover the underlying factors which control the ebb and flow of political opinion, although it is obvious that there must be fundamental laws at work here as in every other domain of human action. The tendency has been to explain these periodic shifts in the political inclinations of the people by seeking, in each case, some new impelling factor. Hence we have had interpretations of political history in terms of dynastic ambition, class antagonism, and economic rivalry; likewise in terms of sea-power, man-power, and money-power. Too seldom have historians been ready to accept the

events of one age as the natural and inevitable reactions from those of an era preceding.

Now the fickleness of man in politics is proverbial. It has been a matter of observation and comment for at least twenty centuries. There are exceptions, of course, but the human being is not by nature capable of a strong, sustained loyalty to any new cause. His urge is to overdo things, both in his likes and his dislikes. Hence, at any given moment he tends to be an extremist in his political attitudes, and extremes always generate their opposites. That is the psychological fact upon which the law of the pendulum rests.

Take the popular attitude toward leadership as an illustration. At one moment we see the whole people crying aloud for it, demanding strong and forceful guidance, and apparently willing to tolerate a virtual dictatorship to gain the desired end. But give them their Moses, and even before he has had time to pilot them out of the wilderness, they become strangely intolerant of his leadership; they call it bossism and other hard names, and insist on getting back to normalcy. Everybody who is not himself a leader begins scolding about it. Presently, with sighs of relief, the voters restore their allegiance to checks and balances, division of powers, deals

and bargains, government by compromise. We have seen that cycle completed in American politics a good many times and there is nothing mysterious about it. It is a perfectly normal phenomenon. People do not naturally crave leadership. But they clamor for it at times because they want something irksome or uncongenial removed, some reforms accomplished. When this immediate aim has been achieved, there is nothing to keep their zeal for leadership stimulated and it quickly subsides.

The decade 1910-1920 will serve as an illustration. It began with an outburst of widespread and violent grumbling over the policy of inaction and drift in national government. On the issue of drift versus mastery, the Republican party split itself in twain. Then ensued, by way of Democratic triumph, an era of strong executive domination. Mr. Wilson determined to be prime minister as well as president. He brushed aside all considerations of constitutional theory and assumed the leadership of Congress without reticence or apology. And his resolute leadership was productive of unprecedented results on the statute book. During the first five years of his presidency, Mr. Wilson obtained, in the way of legislation, practically everything that he asked. The legislative record of these years, 1913-1918, is vir-

tually without parallel in American political history.

Never did this country obtain in greater amplitude exactly what it had been clamoring for. It obtained action and plenty of it. The outcome is obvious to every one now, but it was predictable before the event. It was as inevitable as the thunderclap that follows the zigzag in the darkened heavens. No man of lonely thought and great-souled way of life can lead a democracy long. Murmurs of resentment against executive dictatorship began to be heard even before the war came to a close, and after the armistice the chorus of resentment swelled in volume. By 1920 it had assumed the proportions of nation-wide insurgency and at the presidential election of that year the voters avowed themselves weary of personal government. By an impressive majority they declared for a "return to normalcy."

It has always been so. The cycle represented by a popular demand for leadership and a popular reaction against it runs with almost clock-like precision. Just glance for a moment at the list of American presidents during the past forty years. I give the list without particularizing and without comment, but any one whose memory is good can determine

whether it does not sound like the regular alternation of a loud and a soft pedal in the symphony of national politics. Grover Cleveland and Benjamin Harrison; Grover Cleveland and William McKinley; Theodore Roosevelt and William H. Taft; Woodrow Wilson and Warren G. Harding. I am not a prophet, so I leave to prophets the task of continuing the series.

Equally observable is the lurch of the public temper from conservatism to radicalism and back again. Its inclination to chronological regularity is far greater than most people suspect. No prediction, indeed, can be safer than that momentum in either direction will automatically check itself and produce a revulsion,—and one which is directly proportioned to the strength of the preceding swing. This is a law of mechanics and politics alike. The excesses of the French and Russian revolutions, as every student of history knows, were traceable to the super-oppressions of the old régime in both countries. And the highly centralized despotism which Napoleon Bonaparte established in France under the name of the First Empire would not have been possible but for the excesses of the Revolution. Nor would the pseudo-constitutionalism of the Restoration ever have gained a footing in France had it not

been for the extinction of free political life under Napoleon. Bearing in mind the repetitive proclivities of historical evolution, one therefore takes but little chance of error in predicting that out of the present situation in Russia there will ultimately come a form of government just as highly centralized as was that of the Czars, and perhaps more so. It will be an autocracy disguised by a new nomenclature.

Neither democracy nor liberalism ever proceed in a steady evolution, for both are reactions against the normal order of affairs in government. What we call a "wave of democracy" is merely a protest against the inevitable tendency of political power to drift into the hands of the few. I call it an inevitable tendency, because the principle that all men vested with power will strive to enlarge their authority is no more open to challenge than is the principle that nature abhors a vacuum. "Power inclines to corpulency," as Sam Slick once put it, "and this obesity has to be reduced by reformers who chase it about." Liberalism in politics, on the other hand, is a protest against the inevitable tendency of government to stagnate. That which man does not change for the better, time is sure to change for the worse. In a word both democracy and liberalism are the embodiment of protests, rather than of

policies; they are essentially disintegrating in their immediate effects upon government, and hence must be followed by periods of integration. All history, indeed, can be divided into periods of two general types, centrifugal and centripetal. In one era the old order is being torn down, in the next a new order is being built up.

Run through the history of England. An interval of national disintegration preceded the Norman Conquest. Had it not been so there would have been no conquest. The Conqueror devoted most of his reign to the task of taking an inventory and building up. He strengthened and centralized. So did his immediate successors. But disintegration set in once more, toward the middle of the twelfth century, and Henry II had a hard time to hold it in check. It got away from his sons and reached its climax under John Lackland. Edward I's reign was one of integration, but after him came the Peasants' Revolt and the Wars of the Roses which marked the exodus of English medievalism. The Tudors were integrators, on the whole; and the Stuarts were not. Since the inauguration of the Orange dynasty the swing of the pendulum has been moving more rapidly; it has sometimes gone both ways, forward and back, within the spread of a single reign.

In a sense, therefore, Lord Byron was right when he wrote:

This is the moral of all human tales:
 'Tis but the same rehearsal of the past,
 First Freedom, and then Glory—when that fails,
 Wealth, vice, corruption—barbarism at last!
 And History with all her volumes vast,
 Hath but one page. . . .

The relapse from glory is not often all the way to barbarism, yet war is the greatest of all social disintegrators and it is capable of taking the world a long step in that direction. At the close of a war the old order musters all the strength that it has left, and guided by the instinct of self-preservation, tries hard to restore the equilibrium.

Hence it is a matter of history that great wars are almost invariably followed by a swing to the Right; that is, by a world-wide drift to conservatism. We have had a striking exemplification of this law during the past half dozen years. Look at Italy, Spain, Poland, Germany, Hungary—or even at France and England. Fascism, militarism, conservatism, and reaction have taken the helm in nearly all European countries. They embody the demand of the Old Continent for tranquillity, economy and order. Their triumph has been variously explained, but

fundamentally it is nothing more than a natural rebound from the democratic idealism and political disintegrations of a war era. The world is in a very conservative frame of mind just now, which means nothing more than that political history is running true to form. Not for a hundred years has Europe had so much cause to be reactionary.

There are the best of reasons why a wave of conservatism should always follow in the wake of a war. One of them is to be found in mass psychology. A war era is an interlude of moral exaltation, a period in which the spirits of the people are keyed high by artificial stimulants. We have just had a remarkable illustration of it. For four long years the governments of these warring European countries beseeched their people in terms of idealized patriotism. They called for an adjournment of all that was sordid in politics and for a cessation in party strife. These appeals met a virtually universal response. The political ideals of whole peoples were lifted to a new and higher plane under the inspiration of this great "war to end all war."

Meanwhile, however, these same governments were preaching to their people, in even more appealing tones, sermons of hate and violence toward all enemies, force without stint or limit, direct action,

and the justification of war measures which rode rough-shod over constitutional rights and personal liberties. Propaganda by the carload was loosed upon both belligerents and neutrals—printed matter which, though officially issued, paid not the slightest deference to the distinction between truth and falsehood. Here were a dozen governments shoving out idealism with one hand and fraud with the other. Is it any wonder that the primal emotions which were stirred to the surface by these appeals to savagery, hate, force, violence, and duplicity have not subsided overnight? They never do. On the contrary, when a war is over, they are merely diverted to internal politics.

In America we had much the same experience at the close of the Civil War. Emerson wrote in his *Journal* (November 5, 1865): "We had hoped that in the peace, after such a war, a great expansion would follow in the mind of the country: grand views in every direction, with true freedom in politics, in religion, in social science, in thought. But the energy of the nation seems to have expended itself in the war, and every interest is found just as sectional and timorous as before." This might just as well have been written in 1920 as in 1865. Disillusionment follows every war. When the fight-

ing stops, and the pressure is off, the whole nation undergoes a spiritual slump, and the tide recedes so strongly that you can feel the undertow. Men who have been taught the law of the jungle then show the results of their teaching.

There is also a practical reason why political reaction and an eclipse of liberalism follow every great war. First among the tasks of peace is that of repairing the material damage, and a gigantic task it is. The way in which a war upsets the social and economic organization, in combatant and neutral countries alike, is something that requires no elucidation to those of us who lived through the last one. Nations do not escape the consequences by keeping out of the struggle. Their markets can be cut off, their industries diverted into new channels, and their politics convulsed by a conflict three thousand miles away, as the United States discovered during the years 1914-1916. Declarations of neutrality afford no protection against a general rise in prices, unemployment, profiteering, and economic unrest. The difference between combatant and neutral is only one of degree. Everywhere, in short, war shifts the normal currents of trade and industry, wastes energy and capital, unsettles international finance, and compels a readjustment along all

lines of production. Along with this goes inflation of the currency, borrowing on a huge scale, and an orgy of extravagance in public expenditures. The foundations are loosed. It is the heyday of the *démolisseurs*. War destroys, and paves the way for rebuilding, but of itself it never rebuilds.

All this means, of course, that when the struggle comes to an end there must be a drastic readjustment. Public expenditures must be cut down. New and highly unpopular taxes must be imposed. Thousands of people must be separated from the government payroll. Strikes and other interferences with the rehabilitation of industry must be discouraged. Local governments must be rigidly supervised, so that they too may be constrained to practice economy. But every one of these measures is bound to arouse opposition. In no country do the voters relish a program that calls for more work, more taxes, less spending, less political patronage. Give them a government that is genuinely responsible to the people and they will throw it out of office the moment it attempts to put such a program into operation. Yet these measures must be applied. Without them there is no escape from bankruptcy and economic chaos.

This, in a nutshell, was the dilemma which faced

the various countries of Europe after the Peace of Versailles was signed. Democracy and liberalism could proffer no hope of a way out. Naturally so, for the conditions demanded policies, not protests. Nations will not suffer themselves to go bankrupt in order that they may retain the implications of popular sovereignty. When theories and conditions come into collision, it is the theories that give way. Mussolini may be a dictator; but he balanced the Italian budget. Poincaré may be a usurper of authority which the French people never conferred on him; but he pegged the franc. Baldwin may be a reactionary; but he squelched the general strike. Kemal may be a despot; but he kept Turkey on the map. "The tools to him who can handle them." There is nothing accidental about post-war autocracies. They follow carnage, as the night the day.

And after the autocracies, what then? Will there be a recoil to the Left, a reaction to liberalism; and if so, how soon may we expect it to come? There is only one way of shedding light upon this interesting question; which is to find the last occasion when world conditions were somewhat similar to those of to-day and see what happened at that time. World conditions have never been exactly similar to those of the present day, but by going

back a hundred years one can find a situation which is roughly comparable in most of the main essentials.

Recall the decade 1820-1830. The Napoleonic Wars, in their later stages, had expanded into a great world conflict, for during the years 1812-1815 almost the whole of Europe, with the United States as well, was drawn in. Ultimately the vaunting ambitions of an emperor were brought to collapse in 1815, as they were in 1918, and the world in solemn conclave proceeded to assure itself against any repetition of what had happened. The Congress of Vienna, which took this mission in hand, left Europe in a situation relatively similar to that which materialized from the Peace Conference at Versailles—with all manner of shattered illusions, disputed boundaries, economic depressions, high taxes, and monumental debts.

During these Napoleonic Wars there was the same talk of making the world safe for liberalism by preserving the best fruits of the French Revolution. There was more than talk, as the Stein reforms in Prussia demonstrated. In England, the Tories were much alarmed by the extremism of Tom Paine's *Rights of Man*, and by the hold which his radical doctrines seemed to be gaining upon the

minds of the industrial workers. Many Federalists in America looked upon Paine and the French Jacobins with the same intolerance that their descendants of a later day have bestowed upon Lenin and his fellow Bolsheviks. Men of property trembled lest orderly government might be everywhere overthrown and replaced by ragged republics of the great unwashed.

But the danger-point was passed even before the war came to an end, and with the consummation of peace in 1815 the reaction against liberalism and democracy began to gain momentum. The Bourbons were restored in France under a constitution which they had no mind to observe. Metternich, the arch-reactionary, was firmly installed at Vienna. In England this was the age of Liverpool and Wellington and Castlereagh; the era of Toryism triumphant. In the United States the drift away from Jeffersonian democracy became apparent in the latter part of Madison's term and reached its climax with the accession of John Quincy Adams in 1825. A hundred years ago we had a Massachusetts President in the White House, and then as now the administration was commonly alleged to be dominated by the conservative business interests of the East. Then, as now, the Western farmer was

chafing under the inaction of a government which he thought was interested in everybody but himself. The world marched in a solid column to the Right, to extreme conservatism, autocracy, law and order, *laissez-faire* and reaction during the dozen years which followed Napoleon's collapse at Waterloo.

Then in due course the backwash came, and it synchronized on the two continents. Every student of American history is familiar with the new era which the triumph of Andrew Jackson inaugurated in the United States, with its violent outburst against the aristocratic and conservative policy of the preceding administration. Jacksonian democracy, as a generic term in American political history, is associated with the extension of the suffrage, the rise of the spoils system, the awakening of labor, the war on vested interests as represented by the bank, and a reaction against the spending of large sums for internal improvements. In a word it was a recoil from all the works and doctrines of the Adams-Clay régime. Property qualifications for voting and for holding office were abandoned in one state after another. Many state and local offices, including judgeships, which had been filled by appointment were made elective. The common man came into his own.

All this has usually been attributed to the influence of the frontier. Jackson was a son of the West, as the West existed in 1828; he profigured the spirit of the frontier and his election has been generally interpreted as indicating that the West had become a dominant factor in American national politics. "If Jackson had not been elected president in 1828," writes one of my colleagues, "it is almost certain that the choice would have fallen on some one like him." That is doubtless true. The people were looking to the Left, and a century ago the Left was the West.

This is not a distinction without a difference. To say that the "influence of the frontier" put Adams out and Jackson in; that it ended the seaboard dynasty and proceeded to make the United States safe for democracy; to explain the whole Jacksonian upheaval in this way is misleading. It disregards the essential unity of American and European history. Most of the great dynamic currents have been alike on both continents; alike in volume, direction, and strength of flow. Strong revulsions against aristocratic and conservative government took place in Great Britain and on the Continent of Europe during the years covered by the Jacksonian era. Yet there was no such thing as frontier influence on the other side of the Atlantic.

The decade between 1830 and 1840 was marked by a great advance in English democracy. The Tory rulership, which had continued since 1815, came to an abrupt end. With the advent of the Whigs, parliament enacted the Great Reform Act of 1832, followed quickly by the municipal reforms of 1835. The Act of 1832 nearly doubled the British electorate—an expansion relatively greater than that which took place in the American suffrage during Jackson's reign. The rotten boroughs were abolished, civil and political disabilities in England were removed, and England became a political democracy in fact as in form. In these hectic thirties of the nineteenth century, the common man took the control of government into his own hands. Lord John Russell and Sir Robert Peel were the Sam Adams and Andrew Jackson of British politics, although in somewhat more chaste editions. They bore no more resemblance to Wellington and Castlereagh than Jackson bore to John Quincy Adams.

In France, again, the incoming of the thirties saw the expulsion of the Bourbons and the establishment of the citizen kingship under Louis Philippe. Here also the suffrage was extended and the most reverent gestures were made to the dogmas of popular sovereignty. The citizen king affected to be a democrat in ideas and demeanor. The voice of

Andrew Jackson could have wished no truer echo beyond the seas. Yet it was not "frontier influence" that inspired the July Revolution in 1830. Neither was there any such inspiration in Germany, in Italy, or in Poland, where waves of militant liberalism were set in motion but through various mishaps failed to gain adequate momentum. Even in Canada, just to the north of us, there was a tidal wave of radicalism at this time, culminating in the rebellions of 1836-1837, but the frontier had nothing to do with it.

The frontier interpretation of American history has been overworked. It is time for some one to point out that what happened in the United States during this Jacksonian decade was just what was happening everywhere. The pendulum was taking one of its periodic, world-wide swings. In America the frontier may have given it peculiarities, but not momentum. There would have been a Jacksonian interlude without a frontier. Indeed the eruption would probably have been more violent but for the fact that much eastern radicalism had been drawn westward during the years preceding 1828 and had been considerably sobered by the influence of land ownership.

The triumph of Toryism, which assumed inter-

national proportions during the dozen years which followed the close of the Napoleonic Wars, was bound to induce a reaction. It came during the early thirties in Europe and America alike. The law of the pendulum, rather than influence of the frontier, would seem to furnish the right clue. It has the merit of recognizing, moreover, the essential unity of European and American history. When the world swings to the Right, America goes with it—and to the Left also.

Nor is this at all surprising, for we are a people of the same flesh and blood as Europeans, inspired by the same general motives, subject to the same political shortcomings, similarly intolerant of the *status quo*, and obedient to the same promptings of mass psychology. Let us not be hoodwinked by terminology. Americans during the nineteenth century "civilized a half continent," while Britishers, Frenchmen, and Russians "built up great empires." They, of course, were imperialists, while we were merely humanitarians. But the expansion in both cases was prompted by the same motives and carried through by the same methods in so far as such methods needed to be used. It was all a part of the world-wide quest for wealth and power, the response of civilized mankind to a law of human nature.

Human actions, as Kant once said, are as much under the control of law as any other physical phenomena. Hence every great movement in American politics is likely to have its counterpart abroad, although its outward manifestations may be different and difference in terminology may obscure the essential identity. With greater intimacy of contact between the two continents and with the more complex interlocking of their economic interests, it seems probable that the swings of the pendulum will synchronize even more closely and more visibly in the future than they have done in the past.

I have used the period 1815-1840 as an illustration, but other eras would serve as well. The political history of Great Britain during the whole of the past century is a panorama of upheaval and integration, reform and reaction, liberalism and conservatism. During the years following the close of the Napoleonic Wars we have the Tory domination of Liverpool, Wellington, and Castlereagh; from 1830 to 1841, the epoch of the great reforms under Whig leadership; from 1840 to the middle fifties, another period of Conservative ascendancy, followed by the great duel between Disraeli and Gladstone; then, in the closing quarter of the nineteenth

century, came the almost systematic alternation of Unionists and Liberals which continued down to the outbreak of the war. These alternations did not come with exact chronological regularity, to be sure; in some cases the span of party triumph lasted longer than in others. But the longest term during which either of the two great political elements held office during the century 1815 to 1915 was about a dozen years.

Cycles in politics cannot be chronologically exact for the reason that various factors intervene to modify the inclination to regularity, just as the operation of natural laws can be forestalled, delayed, or speeded up by the actions of man. A war, for example, always constitutes a serious interference with the normal evolution of domestic politics. In war all the usual currents are deviated from their course. The Civil War in the United States gave the Republicans a grip upon power which it took two decades to release. In England, where the date of an appeal to the country can be determined by the party in power, it has more than once happened that a "khaki election" could be utilized, and was utilized, to secure the perpetuation of a government in office. And Continental governments with autocratic leanings have more than once welcomed war

as a means of deflecting the current of home politics from its normal course.

Likewise, the regularity of the cycle is broken from time to time by a well-advised or fortunate political stroke on the one side, or a serious mistake on the other. It can hardly be doubted that the acceptance of bimetallism by the Democratic party in 1896 was a grave strategic error and one that stalled an incipient drift which might well have brought this party into power long before 1913. Good leadership or the lack of it has also had something to do with the acceleration or slackening of the swing. The accession of Colonel Roosevelt to the presidency in 1901 is an instance in point. His aggressive personality served to halt the exodus from the ranks of his party and gave the Republicans an accession of strength which lasted beyond the close of his second term. Other instances could be given, yet we should not over-stress the personal equation. There are vagaries of nature, yet all nature is governed by law. The social structure is subject to conscious manipulation in no greater degree.

It is the irregularities in political evolution that draw our attention, yet the fundamental inclination to a cyclic course is always there. The great sim-

plicities are merely clouded from the unpractised eye. When every allowance is made for the vicissitudes of fortune and misfortune, the truth remains, and it is elemental, that a party in power inclines to grow weaker from the day that it takes office; while the opposing party, barring mishaps, inclines to become stronger. The party in power must choose between the practical alternatives, and by so doing it inevitably creates antagonisms. Even by the exercise of the most adroit statesmanship these antagonisms are not to be avoided. The party in power must distribute patronage, and every seasoned politician knows that this is a channel through which no ultimate strength is generated. The distribution of patronage in the form of offices and contracts creates more resentment than gratitude; it inures to the advantage of the immediate beneficiaries, but never to that of the party as a whole. The party which is in opposition can gather into its fold all who demand impracticable measures, the discontented, the disappointed, and the disillusioned; it can rub salt into their wounds and breathe soothing promises into their ears. Thus it tends to become a Cave of Adullam, sheltering malcontents of every stripe. All are welcome, provided they are willing to join the array against the common enemy.

But when victory at the polls is achieved through these accessions of strength from various irreconcilable quarters, the process of weakening at once begins—begins from the moment that the victors take office, or even before it. The new administration cannot hope to satisfy the expectations of its variegated following, but must shoulder the heritage of disappointment. It is now the turn of the other party to take advantage of the ebbing tide. Let it be repeated, however, that this cycle of strength and weakness does not run its round with a precision that can be forecast. Politics is an art, and a true art is never completely enslaved to formal rules.

There is one phase of this matter to which, in a final word, I beg to invite attention. I have used the pendulum as an analogy, but it is by no means an altogether suitable one. The base of a mechanical pendulum, the point from which it swings, is fixed and immovable; but the base of the pendulum in politics is not. On the contrary, it is continually in motion. In other words, the “point of rest” from which public sentiment gravitates in one direction or the other—this point of rest is not, paradoxically, a fixed point at all. And this for the reason that during the interval between the action and the reac-

tion, the base of the pendulum—that is, the political consensus of the people—has been moving either to the Right or to the Left; so that the return swing carries further, or not so far as would otherwise be the case. If it has moved to the Right, the conservative reaction will be the more intense, and vice versa.

During the years from 1850 to the beginning of the World War, the base of the pendulum in all countries kept moving toward the Left, virtually without interruption. The world as a whole became more liberally minded. Political leaders, both radical and reactionary, had to keep stepping leftwards to avoid being dropped out of the procession. Some of them did not manage to do it. Mr. Bryan, for example, was perhaps the most radical of all the outstanding political leaders in the United States thirty years ago. Not a few people looked upon him at that time as a menace to the very foundations of the Republic. But Mr. Bryan at the time of his death was regarded by the radicals as a straggler from the ranks. He was our premier fundamentalist in religion, and had become a good deal of a fundamentalist in politics. It was not that Mr. Bryan recanted any of his earlier political beliefs during this interim, but merely that the leftward

march of the national consensus had left him stranded on the Right.

The leader in politics who desires to be successful must, therefore, keep his eye on the pendulum, both its tip and its base. Much has been written, autobiographically, about the qualities which a successful statesman must possess, but none is more important than this. We speak of the vicissitudes of politics, and Dr. Samuel Johnson once remarked that "a man used to vicissitudes is not easily dejected." That may be the reason why politicians are so often optimists. But what we call the vicissitudes and vagaries of politics are for the most part not vicissitudes or vagaries at all, any more than the tides of the ocean are pranks of nature. They are, in many instances, merely the manifestations of an underlying law to which neither political scientists nor practical politicians have as yet given sufficient attention.

CHAPTER IV

GOVERNMENT BY PROPAGANDA

"It is the newspaper that has made democracy possible in large countries."
—*Lord Bryce.*

PROPAGANDA is no new thing in politics. But it has become a more aggressive and more influential agency in the molding of sentiment than it used to be. There are two reasons for this: the first is because the channels of propaganda have enormously multiplied. Never before have they been so numerous as they are to-day. The second reason can be found in the fact that countries have grown so big and political questions have become so complicated that it is no longer possible for any public official to be self-informed concerning all the public questions that come before him. Does anybody imagine that a congressman can or will, by his own diligence, become familiar with the merits of the several thousand legislative proposals which come into the Capitol at every session? Of course he neither can nor will. It would take his entire time to read even half of them. So, in order to get him interested in your

measure, you must go to him both in print and in person. You must make him believe that thousands of people are clamoring for this proposed law of yours and that the voters in his own district are especially concerned about it. The quest for legislation has thus become a *mêlée* in which even still, small voices are raised to megaphone pitch, while spectres and bugaboos are paraded in heroic proportions to stiffen the backs of timorous lawmakers.

Few people realize what an extraordinary development we have had in the means whereby propaganda can be carried on nowadays,—in the facilities for impressing one man's mind with the hopes or fears of some other man. How difficult it must have been in ancient times to get any reform accomplished, much less to start a revolution! Ideas and opinions could be spread only by word of mouth. But the invention of printing; the development of the postal service; the telegraph, telephone, and radio; the enormous output of books, magazines, pamphlets, and circulars; the growth of the newspapers in size and circulation; the billboards which shriek their message at you everywhere; the multiplicity of lectures, meetings, conferences, forums, and discussions; the numberless crusading societies, associations, leagues, federations, and clubs; the daily resort

of great crowds to motion-picture houses where the silent drama often points a moral that is not without its political implications:—all these instrumentalities have made it possible for the ideas of one individual to be brought within a few hours to the eyes and ears of millions. The channels of propaganda were never so numerous as now, never so easy to use, and never so effective in reaching the emotions of the whole people.

Among these various agencies, so far as exerting an influence upon the political inclinations of the people is concerned, the newspapers still hold first place, although they are probably not so influential as they were a generation ago. The daily newspaper of to-day, with its artful headlines, its insinuating cartoons, and its adroit handling of news, is still a factor to be heavily reckoned with, despite the fact that politicians like to scoff at its influence. It is the only book that most people read every day. It is their chief avenue of contact with the world—the source of information and the fount of opinion on all sorts of things. Men and women get cross with you when you suggest that they have taken their opinions, ready-made, from some daily journal; but that is literally what most of them do. The newspaper is the greatest of all our public utilities,

for it manufactures the opinion which controls all the others; yet it is subject to less regulation than are the gas companies and the railroads.

Much has been said and written about the control of the press by the money-power. That control, it is alleged, has resulted in the distortion of the news in the interest of privilege. We are asked to believe that it is only the capitalistic press which warps the truth. But let any fair-minded man run through the pages of a Socialist or radical newspaper and see how much unvarnished truth he can find, or how much impartial presentation of opinion. Taking them as a whole, the organs of radicalism have shown no exemplary devotion to fairness and accuracy in their publication of the news. On the contrary they have flagrantly indulged in the faults which they affect to deplore so greatly on the other side. That is not surprising, for intolerance does not confine itself to any one class of editors or readers. It is a trait of the average man, and journals in every camp must inevitably play to it. There is no such thing as an absolutely independent newspaper because there is nowhere on earth an absolutely tolerant circle of readers.

Newspapers try to mold political opinion, and to a considerable degree they succeed in doing it.

Much depends on the traditions of the community and on the nature of the issues under discussion. In some communities the newspapers have afforded so little sound guidance in politics that the people do not look to them for it. In others there are newspapers which try to lead, but whose connection with some definite interest or cause is so well known that nobody reckons their editorial advice at its face value. Some years ago a federal law was enacted, requiring all newspapers to make public, at stated intervals, the names of persons or corporations financially interested; but this legal requirement has availed little in the way of compelling any disclosure of the financial sources which really control. Through the device of a holding company, it is still possible to conceal what the people would like to know.

Assuming that a newspaper is independent and sincere in its support of a cause or a candidate, the value of this support will depend upon the adroitness or aggressiveness with which it is given. Mere editorial advocacy; that is, propaganda confined to the editorial page of a newspaper, counts for very little. Not one newspaper reader in ten even glances through the editorial columns. And those who do read newspaper editorials are for the most part

people who think for themselves. They do not like their opinions ready-made from any source. The average editorial is an appeal to reason, not to the emotions, and the proportion of the electorate to which such an appeal can effectively be made is much smaller than any newspaper would like to confess.

In Europe, especially in France, the situation is somewhat different. Most French newspapers print their leading editorials on the front page. Nor do these flaming deliverances conceal their authorship, as is the custom in America. The French editor puts his name to what he writes. The editorials embody his own personal appeal to the reader. In England, also, the editorial section of a newspaper commands more general attention than in this country. This is particularly true of the great metropolitan dailies. There have been times when these thunderers have held the fate of ministries in their hands. Not without reason, therefore, are the newspapers of England metaphorically known as the "fourth estate" of the realm. We have borrowed that appellation in America, but it has little meaning here.

In American journals, the news columns are more important than the editorials in their influence upon public opinion. It is said to be a rule of good jour-

nalism that the news columns should give the facts without bias, leaving comment for the editorial page. If that be the rule, it is honored chiefly in the breach. Among the 18,000 daily, weekly, and semi-weekly newspapers of the United States, it is a fair estimate that more than eighty per cent are frankly partisan in politics. This partisanship runs right through the news, the cartoons, the syndicated articles, and even reflects itself at times in the character of the advertisements. The great majority of American newspapers make no secret of their party regularity. Most of them, indeed, depend upon it for a large part of their circulation and use it as a means of getting advertising patronage from the public authorities—probate notices, council minutes, advertisements of tax sales, and so on. The truth is that many of our rural newspapers could not exist except as party organs. Among city newspapers, on the other hand, there is a larger degree of political independence. They do not depend to the same extent on patronage in the form of official advertisements and their editors are not usually active in politics. Yet even the outstanding urban dailies are seldom neutral on partisan issues. This does not mean that they are committed to the support of a political party as such, and indeed some of them

maintain a brave affectation of independence; but having gathered together a partisan constituency, or one which is chiefly partisan, there is a natural disinclination to assume the risk of offending it. Both editorial desk and the news room must keep touch with the circulation manager, who in turn is the advertising man's chief reliance. A newspaper organization is not built of watertight compartments.

Complaint is often made that there is too close an articulation between the news columns and the cash register. Yet it is difficult to see how this can be avoided. The publisher of a newspaper is in much the same position as a retail merchant. He has something to sell; namely, circulation and advertising space. To make money he must sell papers, and to sell papers he must give his readers what they want. A wise merchant endeavors to stock his shelves with merchandise which will move; he does not cumber them with goods which, whatever their intrinsic merits, do not have the merit of saleability. Nor should we expect a newspaper to clutter its columns with stuff which customers are not anxious to buy. It is the reader, not the editor or the owner, who ultimately determines what a newspaper shall print, for in the long run the journals

that accurately sense the public taste are the ones which prosper and survive.

The average reader does not want the uncolored truth in politics. He prefers his news delineated with the right tint. When the commuter hurries through the morning edition on his way to work, he likes to find something that will put him in good humor for the rest of the day. The newspaper's job is to help him in the pursuit of happiness. *Fortis semper veritas*. That axiom is sound to the extent that no newspaper can habitually mislead its readers and expect to remain successful. But it is not the naked truth that newspaper readers want. They prefer it with frills and flounces. Anyhow, there are reasons why the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, cannot always be told in the columns of the press. Sometimes the newspapers do not know the inside story, and cannot get it by hook or crook. Sometimes they know all the facts but have obtained them from confidential sources and are under obligation not to make them known. Every experienced politician knows that if you want to keep something out of the newspapers, the best way is to tell them the whole truth in confidence. Sometimes, again, a newspaper has all the facts and is at liberty to print them, but hesitates to do so because

such action might be resented by some powerful interest, political or financial, which the newspaper is reluctant to offend. More commonly, however, the newspapers get the whole event and print at least a part of it, with a toning-down or retouching which gives such impression as may be desired. It is here that the maker of headlines can give things their proper twist. Many readers get their entire impression from what they see at the top of the column, and all readers get at least their initial impressions in that way. Headlines invariably determine the orientation of the reader to what is printed below. Hence there is even more propaganda in headlines than in the news itself.

To a certain extent, moreover, the task of a newspaper is one of selection. More news comes in than can possibly be printed. Some of it is obtained through the newspaper's own efforts; that is, through membership in a press service like that of the Associated Press or the United Press; some of it is sent in by correspondents, gathered by reporters, or otherwise obtained by journalistic initiative. But fully as much, and perhaps more, comes to the editor's desk unsolicited. It is prepared by publicity bureaus or press agents. Publicity work for party organizations, reform movements, business

corporations, and even for ambitious individuals, has become a recognized profession. Virtually every organization of national scope now has its publicity department, and the same is true of groups who are trying to influence the course of government in the states or in the cities. It is the function of these publicity bureaus to deluge the newspaper offices with readable desk-copy, all of it ingeniously doctored to promote their own cause. This material comes in to every large newspaper in almost unbelievable quantities, and there is a strong temptation to use some of it, for often it is snappy stuff with a human interest touch to it, written by men who know their business and sometimes get better salaries than a newspaper can afford to pay. Moreover, this material costs the newspapers nothing; it is ready to use without any considerable revision; it makes usable "filler" when good news is scarce, and often it bears no earmarks of special pleading. Between the lines, however, it is straight, hundred per cent propaganda, every paragraph of it, designed to create in the reader's mind, by subtle implication, some desired attitude or reaction. All over the country this propaganda is manufactured by the ton, and the newspapers, after relegating most of it to the waste-basket, pass the rest along to the public.

In addition to the regular newspapers, there are the specialized publications whose sole purpose is promotion and which exist for the avowed furtherance of some interest or cause. There is scarcely a public movement of any sort in America that does not have its daily, weekly, monthly, quarterly, or annual. No one, so far as I am aware, has ever counted them all, but the total must literally run into the tens of thousands. About the first thing that any reform organization does is to provide itself with a vehicle of propaganda,—civil service reform, divorce reform, reform of the courts, reform of the criminal, reform of the colleges, reform of everybody but the reformer himself. Many of the organizations which advocate such reforms are undeniably active and useful bodies with thousands of zealous members recruited from every part of the country. They embody an honest and fairly efficient endeavor to mobilize some branch of public opinion by awakening the people to a realization of needs and dangers. But many others merely serve as a screen behind which some self-seeking private interest can operate in the name of civic patriotism. They are financed by a few corporations or individuals who have personal ends to serve. The paid-up membership is negligible. But the paid-up secretary of such

an organization is both active and ubiquitous. He attends all meetings of the city council and committee hearings at the legislature, as the mouthpiece of his master's voice. He bombards the newspapers with statements and interviews embodying the attitude of the National Association for the Protection of the Home, or the All-American League for Lower Taxes, or the Federation for Progressive Government, or whatever it may be called.

Choosing a name for one of these spectre organizations is something of an art. It should have the ring of true Americanism. Even by indirection, it should convey no hint of the forces that are behind it. Its titular officers should be men of irreproachable reputation, not prominently identified with politics, and who are not in the least danger of running amuck. They need give no time to the cause, and no money. It is easy to recruit such men and women in any community. So the organization arranges its window-dressing in the approved way, installs its go-getter secretary in a swivel chair behind a mahogany desk, orders a stock of letterheads to flatter the vanity of the figureheads, and is ready to launch upon its campaign of education.

There are three principal methods by which these organizations, whether real or spectral, make their

pressure felt upon the governing powers. The first is by a liberal use of printer's ink. Some of them have regular publications which they send free to their members. Others get out various forms of literature at intervals,—pamphlets, circulars, and appeals which are sent to everybody whom the organization thinks might be interested. Any college professor will tell you that he gets bushels of this enlightenment, for he is assumed to be interested in everything. *Nihil humani nobis alienum*. It comes through the mails in seductive form, neatly enclosed in an envelope that has a look of innocence and carries a two cent stamp. The recipient hastens to pry open this camouflage for a dinner invitation. It turns out to be a palpitating call to "telegraph your congressman"—without a moment's delay and at your own expense. Something is always in imminent danger of passing or being defeated in our legislative halls, with menace to the farmer, or the right of free speech, or the forests, or the Colorado River, or the Eighteenth Amendment, or the Indian. Lo, the poor Indian! How many organizations have taken it upon themselves to look out for his welfare by instigating a telegraphic barrage upon Congress!

The desire to mix into other people's business is

a human frailty. It is a trait of the average man—and woman. In politics this intervention is inspired by the average man's conviction that he possesses common sense in a high degree. He may not have education, or political experience, or worldly goods, or even the respect of his neighbors—but common sense he always deems himself to have. That qualifies him to tell the lawmakers what to do, what not to do. The empty bag tries to stand upright. It takes a little capacity to get oneself elected to a legislature, and become a maker of laws; but it takes none at all to start business as a reformer. Even the lunatic fringe can qualify, as Theodore Roosevelt once lamented.

And now, forsooth, takes on him to reform
Some certain edicts and some strait decrees
That lie too heavy on the commonwealth.

To carry on propaganda for any cause is an expensive business. Even a little of it, when spread over a wide range, costs a lot of money. To cover the electorate of a single city with a small printed leaflet may involve an expenditure of many thousand dollars. Printing, addressing, and mailing a simple circular costs about seven cents per voter if it is done with the utmost economy, which it generally is not. This would mean an outlay of about \$70,000

to reach all the voters of Chicago with a few words of appeal sent through the mails. Some years ago it was announced that half a million dollars had been spent in California to defeat a referendum proposal for the state ownership of water power. The public service companies were said to have contributed most of this amount, and not from motives of pure altruism. Even so, it was only about twenty-five cents per voter. The Anti-Saloon League is the primate among propagandist organizations; its varied activities ramify into every corner of the country and its annual outlay for printed material must be very large.

A second method used by militant organizations is the focussing of direct pressure upon congressmen and members of state legislatures. There are several ways of doing this, but the most effective is to start a backfire in the legislator's home district. If the legislator will not come across peaceably, the thing to do is to raid his home front. Send in some unctuous meddler to stir 'em up! As part of this foray to the rear, it is customary to distribute letters of protest, all ready to be signed and mailed. This is for the benefit of constituents who would not take the time or spend the postage that would otherwise be involved. Sometimes these form-letters come to

a congressman's desk by the thousands. Ostensibly they are the uninspired outpourings of strong feeling from his neighbors and friends; but the cloven hoof discloses itself before the first half-dozen missives arrive. Unhappily, the poor legislator feels in duty bound to acknowledge all these letters, or rather to have his secretary do it. He must assure his people that their sentiments are highly valued and will have his most careful consideration. His misfortune would be much greater were it not that the public pays for it all. It is the public that pays for his secretary, his stationery, and the carrying of these replies through the mails.

In this connection it may not be inappropriate to mention two features of American national government which have been a great encouragement to propaganda at the expense of the taxpayer. One is the practice of giving congressmen leave to print undelivered speeches. Ostensibly, the Congressional Record contains only those discussions which actually take place on the floor of the national legislature, but in reality its dreary pages include a good deal more than this. For when any proselytizing organization has some literature which it desires to disseminate without cost to itself, the only problem is to get some member of congress interested. Then

he need merely say a few words on the floor and ask from his fellow members their "leave to print" additional data in extension of his remarks. Such requests are of almost daily occurrence and they are seldom denied. It is natural that they should be freely granted, for by a refusal the congressmen would incur the greater evil of having to sit and hear the whole deliverance. Thus it comes to pass that sermons, essays, lectures, pamphlets, and even whole books are printed at the public expense, for strictly propagandist reasons. And after they have been printed they are broadcast through the mails under the congressman's frank, free of postage; sometimes as many as ten thousand copies at a time. Literally tons of this material are occasionally dumped by a single senator or representative into the post office at Washington. No other country permits its official record and its franking privilege to be abused in this way.

Then there is the process known as lobbying. At Washington alone there are more than one hundred and fifty organized groups which maintain paid legislative agents, and fully as many more are similarly represented from time to time when individual measures affecting their own interests are under consideration. The function of these lobbyists is to

influence the representatives of the people before a report is made or a vote taken on some measure or measures.

Lobbyists fall into two well-marked groups. There are some whose work is done frankly and above-board. They exert their influence by the presentation of facts or arguments, never by any form of political coercion. Although lobbyists of this type are probably in the minority, their work is of real value to the legislators, inasmuch as it provides them with information, data, and points of view which are timely and helpful. There is no good reason why the activities of such men should be discouraged, much less condemned. Without their presence we would have worse, not better, laws.

But these legislative agents are far outnumbered by lobbyists of another type, who have no compunctions about the visibility of their work. Their business is to cajole or coerce as the tactics of the moment may dictate. Among these lobbyists you will frequently find some former members of the legislative body, men who thoroughly understand the inner workings of the law-making mechanism. Such men are assumed to know the right lines of approach to everybody; and to be conversant with the invisible influences to which each legislator is

most susceptible. All such knowledge is turned to full account.

The work of indoctrinating congressmen is not delayed until after the House assembles in Washington. It commences before each biennial campaign gets under way. It is in evidence at the primaries; indeed all the candidates encounter it from the moment they enter the field as aspirants for the nomination. The further a man gets in politics, the more wary he becomes; hence the lobby has learned the advantage of getting hold of him in the plastic stage. The approach is masked by the use of friends and neighbors. Pledges, or what virtually amount to pledges, are wormed out of him before he realizes their implications. If this can be done without attracting public attention, as is often the case, the legislator presents a less difficult problem after he arrives in Washington. From time to time we hear candidates proclaim that they will go into office without a single obligation or promise to anybody, express or implied. Most of them say it with their tongues in their cheeks. Some candidates are honest in this assertion, or think they are, but the man who goes into public office without even an implied obligation to anybody—he is as rare as a Scotchman in a symphony orchestra.

Many attempts have been made to curb the activity of the lobbyists, especially at the state capitols. In many of the states, the laws now require that all "legislative agents" must be registered, thus disclosing the interests that they represent. It is further required that after the adjournment of the legislative session, every such person shall file a sworn return showing the amount of money received for his services and naming the measures that he has been engaged in promoting or opposing. These laws have not availed to place any serious check upon either the number or the method of lobbyists, nor is it to be expected that they ever will do so, for they do not reach the root of the problem.

The lobby owes its existence, fundamentally, to the fact that we have developed the process of law-making into a highly technical business. Promoting bills at a legislative session, or opposing them, has become a job that only the experts know how to perform. So experts are employed by those who have a tangible stake in the passage or defeat of measures. As a rule they are lawyers by profession and politicians by vocation; but the remuneration which they collect is always earmarked as a fee for professional services. This fee is arranged in advance and is usually a contingent one; in other

words, the lobbyist gets nothing unless he lands the quarry. It is easy to see how this scheme of remuneration offers a temptation to the use of methods which are not always scrupulously ethical.

The country as a whole has no realization of the number and influence of these ancillary lawmakers at Washington. There are about six hundred and fifty of them on permanent station, with regular headquarters. About as many more come to the capital and camp there until the measures in which they are interested go upon the calendar. And literally hundreds of them are coming and going all the time. Most people imagine that the laws of the land are made by the five hundred and thirty-one senators and representatives who make up the Congress of the United States. They overlook this extra-mural legislature of lobbyists. It stages no filibusters, conducts no dramatic investigations, and gets little publicity; but in the mechanism of our invisible government it is always working at full speed. Congress may take a few days off from time to time, but the lobby does not. It neither adjourns, prorogues, nor dissolves. Far better than the newspapers is it entitled to be called the Fourth Estate.

But even the best machines get stalled at times,

and the lobby is no exception. A tragic sight in the closing days of almost every congress is this flying squadron of frantic men rushing around in the forlorn hope of getting their cherished measures out of the legislative jam. Many of them have worked hard all through the session, without pay but with a lively expectation of it. They have watched the prospect grow bright and dim by turns; but now, as the Ides of March draw nigh, they see the rainbow disappear from view,—and with it the pot of gold. From the galleries, as the last sitting comes to an end, they glower down at the filibustering legislators and mutter oaths in bated breath.

Thus far I have spoken of propaganda only in its better known and more common forms; but we must not overlook the fact that there is much propaganda of the whispering type, the kind that is passed along *sotto voce* from one busybody to another, or circulated at secret gatherings of the elect. The Ku Klux Klan is perhaps the most noteworthy of these indoctrinating organizations, and not without significance does it call itself “the invisible empire.” The Klan asserts as its true purpose the punishment of criminals, the maintenance of pure Americanism, the preservation of the sanctity of womanhood, and the elevation of public morals; yet it is prepared to

allow no man any part in the quest of these ideals unless he is native-born, white, Gentile, and Protestant. Thus does it avow a purpose to elevate public morals by a campaign of organized intolerance.

But the Ku Klux, while the most noteworthy of the secret organizations exerting a subterranean influence on government, is by no means the only one. There are others just as cryptic and quite as fully surcharged with racial or religious bigotry. To an extent, it is the work of these organizations that has provoked the Klan into existence and helped to spread its gospel of negation. The assaults and counter-attacks of these forces, clad in the armor of intolerance, have already torn a breach in the ranks of one great national party; a party whose most distinguished apostle once enunciated the doctrine that men are created free and equal.

Two new instrumentalities of propaganda have come into widespread use within recent years. They are the cinema and the radio. The development of the motion picture industry during the first quarter of the twentieth century has been a phenomenon without parallel in the whole history of human recreation. It is estimated that there are about 25,000 motion picture houses in the United States and their total patronage is said to exceed two million persons

a day. Thus far, however, relatively little use has been made of the screen by either candidates or political parties in election campaigns, or even by other organizations of a political character. This is partly because the politicians have not fully awakened to the effectiveness of the motion-picture house as a vehicle for stamping an impress upon the public imagination, but it is also due in part to the fact that the motion picture industry has not been willing, beyond a certain point, to let itself be used as a conscious disseminator of propaganda. There are exceptions, to be sure, but in general the screen has kept itself neutral in political campaigns.

It quickly ceases to be neutral, however, when its own interests are affected by any proposed action of the public authorities. We have had some good illustrations of this during the past decade, in the case of popular referenda on censorship and on daylight saving laws. Even in the industrial states, where the agricultural vote is relatively small, the farmers have sometimes been able to prevent any tinkering with the clock. This success they owe in the main to their valiant allies—the lighting companies, the motion picture houses, and the mothers of small children.

The radio is yet in its swaddling days, yet its pos-

sibilities for the spread of propaganda are already apparent to thoughtful men. Literally millions of people hear the voice of the President when he delivers his messages. Certainly no single newspaper, however large its circulation, can reach so wide a constituency as the broadcasting station commands. There is to-day no cheaper or more effective method of reaching great numbers of people than by the human voice placed "on the air."

During recent political campaigns there has been a significant decrease in the number of people attending mass meetings and rallies. This is not surprising. Sensible men and women will not go to an ill-ventilated hall when they can sit more comfortably at home and hear all that is going on, including the applause and the interruptions. And the loud speaker in the home has this advantage, that you can shut it off when you have had enough, which is something you cannot do with the loud speaker on the platform at a political rally. Most important of all is the fact that you can reach, through the radio, the thousands of thoughtful voters who never attend political meetings; the fireside voters, the forgotten men and women who hold the balance of power in politics and who so frequently provide the

politicians with a surprise on election day. In its potential influence on politics, the radio has this further advantage, that it cannot be controlled by any single interest. It is hardly conceivable that all the broadcasting stations in any part of the country could be monopolized and their use restricted to a single candidate or set of candidates. And in so far as the radio supersedes the old-time rally or stumping tour, it seems likely to raise the whole tone of political discussion. Face to face oratory from the platform has always given a great advantage to the candidate with an imposing front and a loud voice; it has encouraged the gestures of the demagogue and the emotional appeal. The worthy but modest aspirant, no matter how true the ring of his message, has had a poor chance.

The radio is changing this somewhat. Gestures and front cannot be put on the air. There is no packing of the audience and no artificial pumping of its enthusiasm. The candidate who broadcasts his claims for support must make his plea to individuals as such, and not to a cheering mob. Antennae, dry batteries, and short wave-lengths may not be able to revolutionize our political standards during the next generation; but I am by no means certain

that they will accomplish less in that direction than closed primaries, initiative and referendum, preferential ballots, and voting machines have been able to accomplish during the past quarter of a century.

CHAPTER V

THE MONEY POWER: A DEFENSE

"Few men in public affairs act from a mere view of the good of their country, whatever they may pretend; and though their activity may bring real good to their country, they do not act from a spirit of benevolence."

—*Benjamin Franklin.*

THE study of American politics has concerned itself too much with the visible apparatus, to the disregard of the motive power that keeps this apparatus going. "Governments are like clocks," said William Penn; "they go from the motion that men give them." And men give them motion because they have ends to serve. It is one of the agreeable fictions of our political life that people take an active interest in public affairs, go to the polls on election day, contribute to the campaign funds, seek office, and hold office at a personal sacrifice,—all because they are patriots. Some of them do, perhaps. But speaking of men in the mass it is much nearer the truth to aver that *homo sapiens* (as the anthropologists call him) is chiefly moti-

vated in politics, as in everything else, by his acquisitive inclinations; in other words, by the desire to get power for himself and for others who are like him. Old Benjamin Franklin was not merely a philosopher, scientist, journalist, statesman, and man of letters — although these might betoken enough versatility for any one individual. The quotation which stands at the top of this chapter proves him to have been a social psychologist as well. He was an optimist, to whom the sun was always in the East; but he knew his fellow men and more especially his fellow politicians of the Great Age in American history. A man of kindly judgment, he was associated in great adventures with Washington, Jefferson, Hamilton, Madison, Hancock, John Adams, Robert Morris, Gouverneur Morris, James Wilson, Roger Sherman, and many other American patriots of renown (not to speak of some Europeans as well); yet his withering verdict was that "few men in public affairs act from a mere view of the good of their country."

The money power, as we commonly call it, is an organization of human beings. Their activity may bring real good to their country, and on many occasions it has done so; but no more than Franklin's

compatriots do they act from a spirit of benevolence. From first to last in the history of government, this money power, the interest of vested wealth, has been the best organized, the most inherently cohesive, and on the whole the most enlightened determinant of public policy. Racial and sectional groups rise to importance and after a season are placated. Divisions among the people are occasionally molded by issues of a definitely political sort, such as state rights or foreign policy. But nothing can be plainer to the student of political history than the tolerable regularity with which, in all ages and countries, with amazingly few exceptions, the power of the well-to-do has strongly influenced the course of public affairs. It must inevitably be so, and I am not sure that its being so is a matter for either regret or criticism. Indeed, it is this unremitting guidance by a stabilized, intelligent, self-interest that has injected order into the process of political evolution. One might even go so far as to say that without the consistent direction of government by organized wealth throughout the ages, we could not have either the form or the spirit of those political institutions which exist in the United States to-day. The Great Charter of 1215 was wrung from a reluctant king by barons

and land-owners, not by peasants and proletarians. It was the knights of the shire who built up the power of the House of Commons. Hampden, Pym, and Oliver Cromwell were men of substance, gentlemen of England, not members of any laboring or exploited class. Civil liberty owed far more in the early stages of its development to the landed men than to the landless, and in its later stages it is much more deeply indebted to the leadership of wealth than to the riotous emotionalism of that phantom fellow, the common man.

Some years ago the sociologists announced as a new and startling discovery the doctrine of economic determinism. They burst upon us with the tidings that economic self-interest is and always has been the chief determining force in affairs of statecraft. It was in truth no new discovery. Aristotle, twenty centuries ago, pointed out that Greek politics were ruled by economic factors, and almost every writer on political theory since Aristotle's day has adverted to the same obvious phenomenon. The founders of the American republic were by no means oblivious to it. John Adams proclaimed his conviction that the economic status of various elements among the people was the chief factor in determining their attitude on political issues. James Madison averred

that property or the lack of it formed the inevitable basis of political cleavage.¹ Assuredly there is nothing new in the assertion that the ruling classes in government have been mindful of their own advantage, or (to put it less bluntly) that they have always sought to discern an identity between their country's interest and their own. On the other hand, there is no warrant for the assumption, so commonly made, that the interests of the well-to-do are necessarily inimical to the profit of the whole people, or that there is an essential antagonism between wealth and the common good. In the main, as history proves, the two have been identical, or measurably identical; they have not usually been in conflict.

The student of political history, when he has traced power to its source, has been too prone to say, with Dante: "Here we found Wealth, the Great Enemy." When wealth comes into politics, he fears

¹ "The most common and durable source of factions," wrote Madison, "has been the various and unequal distribution of property. Those who hold, and those who are without property, have ever formed distinct interests in society. Those who are debtors and those who are creditors fall under a like discrimination. A landed interest, a manufacturing interest, a mercantile interest, a moneyed interest, with many lesser interests, grow up of necessity in civilized nations and divide them into different classes, actuated by different sentiments and views. The regulation of these various and interfering interests forms the principal task of modern legislation."

that virtue must go out. To many political writers the influence of money in politics has seemed pernicious, as a self-evident proposition. Even so distinguished a student of politics as Lord Bryce has said that "democracy has no more persistent or insidious foe than the money power." Yet the history of democracy does not seem to support that proposition. Nor do perversions of history, although the "new historians" have worked hard to make it so. It is made a reproach by them nowadays that the Constitution of the United States was framed and ratified, one hundred and forty years ago, under the inspiration of men who were large landowners, capitalists, and holders of government bonds—by men who had a direct pecuniary interest in the establishment of a strong national government. Much has been written to prove (what any one might have suspected) that the framers of the Constitution were for the most part men of means, not frontiersmen or factory workers. A majority of them were lawyers by profession. Most of them came from the towns, although only five per cent of the total population lived in the towns at that time. Washington, who presided at the Convention of 1787, was the richest Virginian of his day and probably the wealthiest man in the thirteen states. Pierce Butler of

South Carolina was a man of fortune and ranked among the first in his own commonwealth. Alexander Hamilton, as is well known, was a considerable speculator in land and securities. Robert Morris had large and widely diversified economic interests. His land holdings, at one time or another, ran into millions of acres. A dozen other members of the Convention were entitled to a high financial rating. At least three-fourths of the delegates, in fact, could properly be called opulent according to the standards of the day. An even larger proportion were men who stood to gain, directly and personally, if a strong, successful federation of the states could be achieved. There was not a single small farmer, mechanic, or manual laborer among the fifty-five men who helped to draft the Constitution.

These facts of history being easily established, the imputation of a controlling self-interest is not difficult, if you want to make it. The Founding Fathers had land and mortgages and public securities; their actuating motives must have been colored by a natural desire to protect and to increase this wealth. And their work must be construed in the light of their motives. Yet the same basis for an ungenerous imputation is at hand in the case of the

men who signed the Declaration of Independence, eleven years previously. They were also men of wealth, most of them. John Hancock was probably the richest man in Massachusetts. Thomas Jefferson was a large owner of property. Benjamin Franklin, by his thrift and sagacity, had accumulated what was a large fortune according to eighteenth-century standards. John Adams, Robert Treat Paine, and Elbridge Gerry, men of Massachusetts, were by no means poor in 1776, nor have their descendants become so since the Declaration was penned. No one has yet made an intensive study of the economic status of the Signers, so far as I am aware, but I will venture the prediction that such a study would show relatively as much wealth represented in this galaxy as in the group which framed the Constitution.

Shall we proceed, in that case, to the conclusion that the Declaration of Independence was also inspired, not as we have commonly supposed, by patriotism or a belief in the blessings of liberty to all the people, but by class consciousness and an ungenerous desire on the part of wealth and property to promote and preserve its own advantage? Robert Morris of Pennsylvania was a signer of both historic documents. Of his part in the Constitutional

Convention it has been said that he "was an effective representative of the speculative land operators, the holders of securities, the dealers in public paper, and the mercantile groups seeking protection for manufacturers—in short, every movable property interest in the country."¹ Had the leopard changed his spots during the preceding eleven years?

Granted that the Constitution was largely the work of the money power and that its ratification was chiefly effected through the support of the same interests. Did the money power thereby do posterity a bad turn? Is there any reason to believe that a constitution framed by Patrick Henry, Samuel Adams, Daniel Shays, and the other rabble-rousers of their day would have served the nation better during the last fourteen decades? France, a few years later, adopted a republican constitution drafted by the foes of wealth and property. It lasted for three years while the guillotine worked overtime. Again, in 1848, the second French Republic came into being under similar auspices. It disappeared in the *coup d'état* of 1851, with none to do it reverence.

Not only the Declaration and the Constitution,

¹ Charles A. Beard, *An Economic Interpretation of the Constitution of the United States* (New York, 1913), p. 135.

but most of the landmarks of national legislation during the past one hundred and forty years are the work of men whose affiliations were with big business. Their work began in Washington's first administration, under the aegis of Alexander Hamilton—with the funding of debt, the inauguration of a tariff policy, and the chartering of the first bank of the United States. Since Hamilton's time, the general direction of American national policy by the money power has been fairly consistent, with the exception of a few hectic interludes, of which the reign of Andrew Jackson is the best remembered. The outstanding issues of this whole period have been chiefly economic—the tariff, the banking system, the preservation of the gold standard, regulation of the railroads, labor questions, the curbing of big business, taxation and surtaxes—all of them calculated to promote the solidarity of the propertied class. Time and circumstance have meanwhile changed the custodians of the money power, but not the aims or methods. Of old it was the landowner who typified big business and vested interests. To-day it is the corporation, the banker, the railroad operator, the manufacturer, the shipowner, the merchant. The money power has changed its outward semblance, impelled thereto by the industrial trans-

formation of the past hundred years. It will keep changing, no doubt, but there are no signs that its influence will diminish so long as cupidity remains a trait of mankind. Wealth will have power so long as wealth remains. Those who own the earth will rule it.

Philip of Macedonia was in the habit of boasting, twenty-two hundred years ago, that he could capture any city of Greece by driving into it an ass laden with gold. To-day there are men who can capture city halls and state capitols with the same facility and in the same way—except that it is a “bagman” who now carries the coin. These bagmen have become an essential part of our invisible government. They haunt the corridors of the legislative chambers or the rotunda of some neighboring hotel, serving as *agents de liaison* between the corporations, the bosses, and the lawmakers. Wealth is always exposed to attack while legislatures are in session. It must bully, beg, or buy its own protection as the circumstances may require. A great game it is, with bosses and bagmen, lawyers and lobbyists, heelers and hinky-dinks all jostling one another in their zeal to see that the people get the laws they ought to have. No wonder big business rather enjoys a part in it.

Now it is an interesting and significant fact that the whole course of American political development during the past fifty years has served to accentuate and facilitate the accumulation of political power in the hands of these emissaries of the rich. Franchises, patronage, and other gifts from the public authorities are worth a good deal more to the recipient than they used to be. Whole fortunes lurk in single paragraphs of an innocent looking bill. The newer agencies of democracy, such as the direct primary, the initiative, referendum and recall, the extension of the suffrage to women, and the removal of party designations from the ballot in local elections—all of them have served to increase, not to diminish, the cost of operating our electoral machinery. They have caused the diversion to politics of vastly larger sums than were formerly used. And it ought to be reasonably clear that in so far as we make our politics more expensive to all who engage in it, we proportionately strengthen the power of those who have money at their command. The money must come from those who have it. It must come from those who have and are willing to give.

Most of these electoral reforms have been predicated upon a false hope. They have been based upon the expectation that the whole people would

act wisely and in their own interest, if they could only be safeguarded against political guidance, leadership, and influence. Lest leadership develop into bossism, we deprive the people of it. We suggest that they inform themselves, make up their own minds on rival candidates and complicated issues—which is just what the demos has never done and will never do. People will seek and obtain guidance and leadership from some source. The function of informing the voter must be performed by somebody, and it has become a very expensive function. It involves building up an organization and spending large sums of money. Take the direct primary as an illustration. It is a device intended to make the corruptible put on incorruption. In various ways it has demonstrated its superiority over the older methods of nominating candidates by conventions of delegates. There is no doubt that it has at times encouraged independent voters to take a more active interest in the nominating process. It has brought out a larger vote than was customarily cast for delegates to nominating conventions and has helped to raise the tone of politics, especially in local elections. But, on the other hand, there can be no question as to the expensiveness of the direct primary to all concerned. A stiff primary

contest always develops into publicity *combat à outrance*. Victory demands that the candidate shall "sell himself" to the people. He must do this by using all the agencies of self-marketing that are open to him, hence the campaign becomes a spirited competition in high-powered salesmanship and radio perorations.

Candidates and political organizations do not spend money because they like to do it. They spend because they want voters to come out on election day and support the ticket or the issue for which the money has been collected. If this end could be secured in any other way than by collecting and spending money, they would utilize that way, for there is enjoyment for nobody in the task of raising a large campaign fund. The job is always wished on somebody who cannot well avoid assuming it. He has his own troubles in making subscribers disgorge, and feels himself entitled to a commensurate reward if the money achieves the end in view. He usually gets it.

Those who are unfamiliar with the workings of our invisible government were shocked and surprised, not long ago, when senatorial investigations disclosed what seemed to be unduly large expenditures on behalf of various candidates at some of

the state primaries, especially in Pennsylvania and Illinois. The figures ran into the hundreds of thousands. There was a fine display of indignation in purist quarters that so large a "slush fund" should be spent in "debauching the electorate." Yet these revelations afford no occasion for surprise. Democracy is the most expensive form of government known to man; its cost increases as the square of the degree of direct popular participation in it. The adoption of universal suffrage doubled the size of the voters' list and made it far more than twice as costly to cover the ground. Primary campaigns are conducted under the law of increasing cost per capita. The more voters to be reached and informed, the higher is the cost per voter. We say that every candidate for a nomination should appeal to the people on his merits, but how few of us ever stop to figure what such an appeal involves! It means literally tons of campaign literature, the hiring of halls, paying for space in newspapers, placarding the billboards, the transportation of speakers to rallies all over the state, clerk hire at headquarters, "messengers" by the hundred, the chartering of radio broadcasting stations, organizing political clubs, getting endorsements, and all the rest of it. In a word, we make politics a highly organized business and

then seem surprised that business involves the spending of money. Broadcasting appeals by radio seems a mere incident of the campaign, but this diversion costs every candidate from \$15 to \$20 per minute.

When the citizen receives a campaign circular in the mails it does not always occur to him that the cost of sending this missive, including the preparation of the material, the printing, the addressing, and the postage, may amount to about ten cents per voter; in other words, that it may cost a hundred thousand dollars to reach a million voters with a single appeal sent through the mails. There are more than two million registered voters in Pennsylvania, and more than three million in Illinois. To place a ballot in the voter's hands (including the expense of printing it, the pay of the polling officials, etc.) costs the public treasury about fifty cents per head; yet we expect candidates and party organizations to inform the voters and get them to the polls on half that amount. Many of our Corrupt Practices Laws set an even lower maximum. Inevitably such legal stipulations are ignored or evaded. They are treated with the same devotion that the bootlegger accords the Eighteenth Amendment. And it is a safe guess that they will continue to be honored

mainly in the breach so long as they seek to attain the impossible by mere fiat of law.

Bear in mind that I am not trying to justify the amount of money expended by individual candidates in senatorial primaries or mayoralty campaigns, much less the manner of spending or the sources from which the campaign funds were derived. I am merely pointing out that our philosophy of a direct appeal to the electorate, as we have embodied it in the state-wide primaries, non-partisan elections, popular referenda, and universal suffrage—all of it is bound to be regularly associated with big spending. It is a philosophy that exalts the man of means. The idea that a candidate of high personal merit, but without an organization, without funds, without powerful interests back of him, can burst into the arena of politics and win a party nomination is the outstanding hallucination upon which the direct primary rests. It is political hokum of the first order. The idea that the outcome of a popular referendum is determined solely, or even largely, by the merits of the question at issue—that idea is its bedfellow among the absurdities of political realism. Success at the polls, for men and measures alike, very often depends upon the amount of high voltage propaganda that can be bought and paid for. The

human herd does not seek the thoroughbred and follow him. It trails the bell-wether with the loudest clang.

Some years ago the Kenyon Committee of the United States Senate reported that the expenditure of vast sums at primaries and elections was a "growing menace to the nation." The menace is relatively no greater to-day than it was fifty years ago. It is estimated that the Republican national organization spent only \$100,000 to elect Abraham Lincoln in 1860; it reported an expenditure of \$3,000,000 to elect Calvin Coolidge in 1924. Thirty times as much! But wait a moment. The population of the country has nearly quadrupled since Lincoln's first election, and woman suffrage has virtually doubled the proportion of qualified voters in it. This alone would warrant an eightfold increase in campaign expenditure. But the cost of everything connected with political campaigning has also mounted during these sixty-four years. The cost of renting headquarters, advertising, printing circulars and sample ballots, hiring halls, clerk hire, stenographic service, transporting speakers, and all the rest has certainly doubled in the interval—in some cases it has a good deal more than doubled. Campaign methods have also improved in quality, with the inevitably greater

cost that this involves. The crude broadsides and dodgers have given place to lithographed circulars and handsomely printed campaign handbooks. All in all, therefore, an expenditure of three million in 1924 is relatively not much larger than the increase of population, voters, prices, and the improved quality of campaigning would seem to warrant. It is certainly not so great an increase over the modest figure of 1860 as to warrant its being called a menace to the nation.

Not the amount of the campaign expenditures, at any rate, but the destination of them is what ought to have our solicitude. It is quite conceivable, though by no means likely, that a political organization could spend a million dollars to secure the election of its candidate for governor in any of the more populous states, without putting a single dollar of it to sinister use. On the other hand, it is entirely possible to have a campaign fund of modest proportions and devote a large part of it to uses that are reprehensible. Why limit the amount of campaign expenditures? Why not restrict, under stringent penalties, the forms which such spending may take? Much of the present-day spending—for campaign literature, advertising, radio broadcasting, and the like—is intended to be educational.

It is designed to inform the populace. Of old the ruling interests and the privilege seekers did not bother to inform the masses. To-day they concede the necessity of doing it. That is not, in itself, a bad sign.

But it is not merely at primaries and elections that the money power is said to show its pernicious hand. There is the propaganda during the intervals between election campaigns; there are the legislative agents and lobbyists who are in action the year around. It is a nation-wide impression that all political propaganda is in the interests of big business, and that the only lobbyists are those who represent the vested interests; that is, the railroads, the great industrial corporations, the beneficiaries of a high tariff, Wall Street, and the public utility companies. The plain citizen is encouraged by the yellow press to boo at the packers and the profiteers, the trusts and the stock exchanges, the money octopus in general. It has become a national recreation. In earlier days, when men wanted to work off their surplus animosity, they were encouraged to burn heretics, whip witches, or bait the Jews. Nowadays, many of them seem to find just as much enjoyment in assailing the open shop and the company union, baiting the super-tax victims, and taking pot shots

at the World Court or the League of Nations. We are expected to believe that righteousness is always on the side of the dirt farmer or the horny-handed fellow in the factories, and that it is he who always gets the short end of the lawmaker's solicitude in Congress and elsewhere.

Yet the fact is that the most formidable lobby which has functioned in Washington during the past half dozen years is the one which represents the American Farm Bureau Federation. It is the most formidable because it has the widest ramifications and the least compunction in putting the screws on senators and congressmen from the agricultural states. The lobby of the Anti-Saloon League runs it a close second. And that of the American Federation of Labor, in the extent and effectiveness of its coercive power, deserves third place. None of these three organizations, be it observed, is controlled by big business; two of them are avowedly hostile. The money power, in its tussles with farm blocs and with labor lobbyists at Washington, has chalked up more defeats than victories. It would have fared worse during the past decade but for the superior astuteness of its congressional strategy.

But I am not trying to whitewash the plutocrat in politics. It would be a thankless task, for nobody

loves him. It would be an impossible task, for there are too many sins on his conduct-sheet. The money power is no myth in American political life; it is an active, relentless, and for the most part an invisible, factor there. But a good deal of the popular antipathy to it rests upon a myth—on the illusion that its activities are invariably detrimental to the best interests of the people as a whole, and that a quietus can be placed upon these activities by enacting some sort of prohibitory law. It is with this contention that I take issue. Wealth, in many ways, is the best friend that democracy has had. Democracy has made its greatest progress in rich and prosperous nations, during rich and prosperous times. Say, if you will, that it has merely ridden on the crest of the wave, that it has seized the popular impulse and directed this momentum. That may be true. But it does not alter the fact that the money power chose to help, not to hinder. It has been at times a valiant helper.

It was the money power that rallied to the Revolution and carried the cause of Independence through the darkest days. It was the money power that secured the ratification of the Constitution by the several states, committed the country to the policy of protection and thus laid the basis of our present

industrial supremacy, established the American banking system, gridironed the continent with railroads, secured the resumption of specie payments after the Civil War, and preserved the gold standard in 1896. Vested wealth in politics has often sinned against both the truth and the light, but it is by no means the scarlet woman that our self-constituted tribunes of the common man would have us believe. It has used both its own brains and the hired brains of others. It has been guided by sense, not sentiment. The proletariat may be swayed by its emotions, but vested wealth is not, for it has none. It is cold-blooded and calculating. In the great crises of political history, by reason of this willingness to face the facts, its own interests have usually coincided with the ultimate advantage of all the people.

CHAPTER VI

OUR STRENGTHENING SECTIONALISM

"The states have been declining, and are likely to continue declining in our politics; but the groups of states called sections are likely to become more significant as the state declines."

—*Frederick Jackson Turner.*

E pluribus unum. The accent is on the *pluribus*. One hundred and fifteen million Americans constitute a single unified nation in name, in allegiance, and in the political ideals which they profess—but not in economic interests, and hence not in the political ideals which they pursue. In other words, we have a sectionalism which corresponds somewhat roughly to Europe's nationalism. And this is not surprising, for, like Europe, the United States is not a country but a continent. Superimpose our map upon theirs, and what do you find? San Francisco coincides with Brest and New Orleans with Athens. Charleston drops east of Constantinople and Duluth keeps company with Moscow. The whole kingdom of Italy, with its forty million people, hardly covers that portion of California which lies north of the Tehachapi.

Most Americans do not realize what an imperial area they possess, or how widely diversified its various regions are. Geography has made sectionalism inevitable in this leviathan commonwealth by differentiating the country into a corn belt, a wheat belt, a cotton belt, a desert area, a Great Lakes area, a Gulf area, and two ocean seaboard. Within their respective boundaries, these great natural regions have physical conditions which are measurably homogeneous, but the regions differ widely from one another in resources, in economic capacity, and hence in their political orientation. North Dakota and Louisiana, although under the same flag, are less alike in physical conditions than Denmark and Sicily.

It is by overlooking this outstanding geographic phenomenon that even well-educated Europeans become befuddled when they try to follow American politics. They think of Congress as the legislative body of a homogeneous nation—as a House of Commons or a Chamber of Deputies. But it bears a closer analogy to the assembly of the League of Nations. The political philosophers have told the world that the American Senate represents the states, while the House of Representatives does similar service for the people; but in reality both chambers reflect the opinions and desires of the

regions from which their members come. Many years ago President Lowell proved by an analysis of the records that on most important issues both senators and representatives in Congress were regularly disregarding party lines. More recently my colleague, Professor Arthur N. Holcombe, has shown that it is the section which counts.¹ Party allegiance is merely the elastic band that tries, often quite ineffectually, to hold the expansive sectional loyalties in check. Make a black-and-white map of the congressional vote on any measure of great economic importance and see how nicely the sectional pattern emerges. For example, when the McNary-Haugen bill for farm relief was put to a vote in the national House of Representatives (February, 1927), not a single congressman, Republican or Democrat, from the whole block of six New England states was recorded in favor of the measure; on the other hand, not one congressman from the districts constituting the western agricultural bloc was recorded against it.

The nomenclature of American government recognizes only states and congressional districts as areas of national representation. It takes no account of

¹ See the chapter on "The Sectional Basis" in his *Political Parties of To-day* (New York, 1924).

the groupings of the states into regions, or of these regions as persistent factors in the determination of national policy. And students of government, both at home and abroad, have been misled by this "terminological inexactitude," to use a Gladstonian magniloquence. They have been talking in terms of state rights, national traditions, and party principles, when sectional sentiment, sectional interests, and sectional rivalries should have absorbed more of their attention.

In all the social sciences, we are inclined to pass under the bondage of words. They have the power to loose and the power to bind. Error is never so firmly lodged as when it has its roots in the common speech. Every ill-used political expression forms a cloud, as it were, which conceals the realities, and by so doing, obscures the truth. Much of our unstitched thinking in politics is attributable to the badly fitting garments in which we clothe our thoughts, for every inaccurate term contains the embryo of a fallacious proposition. Civic education should not disregard, therefore, the importance of mastering the right use of words; tracing their birth and behavior, and fitting them closely to facts and ideas. President Charles W. Eliot once defined an educated man as "a man who has learned to use his

own language well." Many worse definitions have been framed than that one.

People seem to take for granted that there is no relation between government and geography except that both words begin with the same letter of the alphabet. They think of Rhode Island and Texas, of Nevada and New York, in the same terms because both are states of the Union. That is about the only thing they have in common, and this single aspect of similarity is far outweighed by a thousand features of economic and social differentiation. Books relating to American history and government are full of references to states' rights and state sovereignty, but find me an instance in American history where either issue has ever been raised by a single state, or otherwise than by a group of states! South Carolina was not alone in nurturing the doctrine of nullification; her misfortune came from the attempt to put that doctrine into effect unaided and prematurely. Southerners like to speak of the Civil War as the "war between the states"; but it was a war between sections, if ever there was one. We have free trade among the states, so the national constitution provides—but that is not the important thing. Freedom of trade between the great and diversified economic sections of the country is what

counts—freedom of trade between the industrial East and the agricultural West; between the regions which produce raw materials and those which manufacture; between semi-tropics and the temperate zone.

The United States is a protectionist country, Europeans tell us, and among all countries the one most wedded to a high tariff policy. I reply that the United States is a free trade country, exemplifying the principle of free trade in relation to a greater volume of business than can be found anywhere else on earth. The countries of Europe, with their encircling tariff walls, are not pursuing a fiscal policy akin to that of the United States, although they delude themselves into thinking so. They are doing just the reverse. Let Denmark trade freely with France, Poland with Spain, and Hungary with Portugal; repeal forever all the tariff laws from the Baltic to the Mediterranean, from the Atlantic to the Caspian; set up a European Zollverein with a tariff against the rest of the world—then you will have mirrored the fiscal policy that the United States has been pursuing for four generations. It would make a New Europe, as it has made a New America.

Europeans speak frankly of nationalism and are rather proud of it; but Americans do not like to

talk about sectionalism, which in many of its phases is the same thing. Yet a reality of politics is not made any less real by ignoring it. Sectionalism has always been a factor of vital importance in the political evolution of the United States. It assumed that rôle at the very outset. The contest for the ratification of the federal constitution was waged on a sectional basis. It was a battle between coast line and hinterland. This cleavage continued for a half century after the constitution went into effect. The strength of the Federalist party came mainly from the areas close to the seaboard. It was derived, for the most part, from a combination of commercial interests in the North with plantation owners in the coast regions of the South. This was the sectional coalition that put through Hamilton's program for a refunding of the national debt, the assumption of state debts by the nation, the establishment of a United States bank, and the inauguration of a tariff policy. The whole fiscal policy of the new Union was launched by sectional momentum.

But this domination of federal politics by a strip of seaboard could not long continue. The inland regions were rapidly filling up; all they needed was the consciousness of a special interest and the right sort of leadership. Time gave them the one and

Thomas Jefferson the other. Under the Virginian aristocrat, the back country grain-growers from Maine to Georgia were marshalled into the first American farm bloc, and the Federalists were roughly ousted from their control of the national government. The West, in 1800, scored its first victory over the East. It kept the fruits of the victory for the ensuing quarter of a century.

Any thoughtful observer, looking at the drift of American politics during the first four decades of the nineteenth century, might have confidently predicted that the lines of cleavage would for all time run vertically, with East and West pitted against each other, and the boundary slowly moving westward as population thickened. Every election down to 1840 had been fought on some such basis. Yet the prediction would have been wide of the mark, for a new issue was slowly forging its way to the front, and this issue—the issue of slavery and secession—was destined for nearly three decades to swing the sectional alignment from vertical to horizontal, creating a new sectionalism of North and South. This new sectionalism engendered far more bitterness than the one which preceded it and eventually brought the Union to the verge of disruption. Men argued about the right of a state to secede. That

merely betrayed their deference to constitutional forms and phraseology. What they really had in mind was the right of a whole section to secede. No state actually desired to secede and set up for itself, alone and independent. Secession was not an end in itself, but merely a means to the formation of a new confederacy based upon a sectional consensus as respects the dominant issue of the day. And this consensus was the grandchild of geography.

Men argued about the issue, went to war over it, and finally settled it (as they thought) at Appomattox. But they did not really settle it. Slavery and secession are still among the enduring issues of American politics. They stare at you from the face of the returns at every presidential election. I do not mean, of course, that any one nowadays advocates either slavery or secession, but merely that several million American voters continue to mark their ballots as though no other issue had come to the front since the days of the war and reconstruction. The Solid South remains an intact constellation, and New England remains almost equally unswerving on the other side of the same old issue, although we hear much less about the solidarity of New England. Meanwhile we have had a recrudescence of the earlier sectionalism, East against

West. It is quite as pronounced as it was a hundred years ago; but unlike the sectionalism of North and South it has not become stratified. There is no color line to accentuate it.

So geography is the pivot on which a great deal of our political discussion revolves. Our political leaders ask themselves whether the Solid South will stay solid in the wake of a candidate whom it does not want. That goes to prove how far our philosophy of the party system runs wide of the facts. A political party is commonly defined as a large group of men and women who profess allegiance to common principles and who think alike on public questions. We are asked to believe, in fact, that voters choose a political party as the outcome of their own thought and reflection. In reality this is very seldom the case. Far more often the voter's allegiance to a political party is the result of his ancestry, or his occupation, or his personal associations, or something else that is largely irrelevant to his own rational processes. Most men and women inherit their party affiliations. They are creatures of the Mendelian law. They are Republicans or Democrats because their fathers and grandfathers were, although they do not relish being told so. Taking the country as a whole, it is within bounds to say

that at least sixty per cent of the active electorate is strictly "regular" in its party allegiance. Irrespective of issues or personalities, the partisan loyalty of these groups is almost absolutely dependable. Some of these voters—yes, thousands of them—would support Beelzebub for governor, with the right tag pinned on him. It is not that these men and women "think alike"; many of them do not think at all. They exemplify the truth of a remark once made to my students at Harvard by the then-chairman of the New York State Democratic Committee, that every well organized political party must rest firmly upon "a foundation of fools."

Unity of thought and allegiance to common principles is about the last thing that a party organization possesses. Glance for a moment at our two major organizations of to-day. The basis of their integration, and likewise of their internal discords, is not issues, but geography. No sectional interest is strong enough to dominate either of the two major political parties; hence we have sectional coalitions, and strange fraternities they make. The Democratic party is made up of two outstanding elements: namely, the solid South and a large, widely scattered following in the North and West, particularly

in the industrial cities. These two elements have virtually nothing in common. The Southern Democracy is largely native-born, Protestant, conservative, agricultural, and bone-dry. The Northern wing of the party is, by contrast, very largely of foreign birth or descent, diverse in religion, predominantly industrial in occupation, more radical in its point of view, and wringing wet on one of the main issues of the day. What a travesty to say that here is an organization whose members profess the same principles and have a common program!

Nor is the situation in the Republican party substantially different. It is merely that here the cleavage is East and West, not North and South. The G. O. P. is also a composite of two great elements that have little in common. The Eastern wing of the Republican party, resting on New England and Pennsylvania, is heavily—but of course not wholly—industrial, strongly protectionist, and desirous not only of getting back to normalcy but of staying there. But as you move toward the Republican Middle West, Northwest, and Far West you find the party taking on a bucolic color. Its attitude on public questions tends to center around the interests of agriculture, and it can be counted upon to insurge

whenever the price of wheat or corn goes down. The farmer, in all ages, has been an economic determinist.

*"Frugibus alternis, non consule, computat annos"*¹

Hence the western section of the Republican party tends to be restless, insurgent, introspective, and its inclination to bolt from the paths of party regularity gives the Republican leaders perpetual concern. So there is no approach to unity of interest in the ranks of either organization.

This attempt to form an oil-and-water amalgam has two inevitable results. It tends to turn our national party conventions into battlegrounds of sectional rivalry. Nominations for the presidency in both parties during the past sixty years have emerged, almost without exception, from the smoke of conflicts between North and South or between Middle East and Middle West. Nominations for the vice-presidency have gone, with almost equal regularity, as a consolation prize to the vanquished region. Thus an American national convention, as has often been pointed out, bears a striking resemblance to a European diplomatic congress, out of which one nation emerges as the victor over another,

¹ By crops, not consuls, he regards the year. Claudian's *Old Farmer of Verona*.

or at which both are drawn into a reluctant compromise.

It is so not only with party nominations, but with the party platforms. The ostensible purpose of a platform is to set forth foundations of belief and to enunciate a definite program. But owing to the incongruity of the sectional elements which make up the party, this purpose can rarely be fulfilled. As a matter of political strategy, the platform must aim to please all and offend none; which means that it must be compendious, cryptic, and above all things, evasive.

Take the tariff issue, for example. There are three alternatives in relation to the tariff. You can raise it, lower it, or leave it as it is. One might suppose that a party platform would promise one of these three things. But it is a rare platform that does anything of the sort. Here is what the Republican national platform of 1924 said about the tariff:

We believe in protection as a national policy, with due and equal regard to all sections and to all classes. It is only by adherence to such a policy that the well-being of the consumers can be safeguarded, that there can be assured to American agriculture, to American labor, and to American manufacturers, a return to perpetuate American standards of life.

Notice the solicitude for everything and every-

body; for the consumer and producer, for the farmer, the industrial worker, the employer, for "all sections and all classes." The Republican party pledges us a tariff that will be equally beneficent to buyer and seller, to agriculture and to industry, to North, South, East, and West alike. Surely that pledge pays a poor tribute to the sagacity of a practical people, for no tariff equally advantageous to all classes and sections ever has been or ever can be framed.

But the Democratic party did not propose to be outdone by any such inclusory appeal, and its national platform of 1924 promptly countered with the following more concise but equally alluring assurance:

We pledge ourselves to adjust the tariff so that the farmer and all other classes can buy again in a competitive manufacturers' market.

There is a special appeal to the farmer here, for it is the belief among Democratic politicians of the East that the farmer is of all men the most susceptible to skullduggery; but you will observe that "all other classes" are by no means forgotten.

Nor is there much likelihood that party platforms will be otherwise than cryptic and evasive until we have a pretty drastic party realignment. To make partyism rational in the United States, there

ought to be a division between the Right and the Left, between Conservatives and Radicals, as in European countries, cutting through the geographical sections indifferently. But this is hardly to be hoped for in our day. Sectionalism as a basis of American party allegiance is too deeply rooted. And in a governmental area so great as ours, it is not altogether without some compensating virtues.

It is by reason of these virtues that our aim should be not to destroy but to fulfill. The section or region is the only *natural* area that we have. Why should we insist on ignoring it entirely in the structure of our political administration? A good deal of our ineptitude in the handling of sociopolitical problems is the result of our doing so. As entities of government we accept the nation and the states, both artificial creations, and obtrusively decline to make full use of the natural divisions which the primal architect of the universe thrust in between. We insist on going along with a bipartite allocation of powers and functions which was devised one hundred and forty years ago for a nation of only four million people, living simple lives in relative isolation, at a time when land could be had for the asking and when equality of economic status was no mere fiction of American life. It was devised

to meet the governmental needs and problems of that primordial day and was then ample for the needs immediately in view. But during the intervening decades the number of states has nearly quadrupled, the population has increased almost thirtyfold, and the problems of public administration have been accentuated a thousand times over.

The result has been a spread between the states and the nation far wider than the Founders of the Republic could ever have anticipated. In their relation to the problems of American economic and social life, the states have been gradually receding as entities of political action, whether regulative or constructive, until to-day they are all but powerless in some of the fields ostensibly reserved to them by our scheme of government. They claim jurisdiction over the problem of child labor, for example, but are altogether unable to cope with it.

Under these circumstances, the inevitable is happening. When a problem of industry or of social welfare becomes too big to be handled by the authorities of the individual states, there are only two alternatives under present conditions. One is to confess our helplessness and bear the evils as best we can; the other is to demand that Washington take the matter in hand, whether it belongs there

or not. It is natural that a practical people should choose the latter alternative. They will continue to prefer it, and no theory of division of powers will stand in their way. Jurists may sob over the "vanishing rights of the states," but it is a fair guess that these rights will continue to dwindle as our problems keep growing in size. The steady erosion of state powers is bound to go hand in hand with the increasing complexity of our economic and social life. Nothing in the realm of political prophecy can be more certain than that the intrepid rear guards of the states-rights army are fighting a lost cause. Or, to change the metaphor, they are "plowing the seashore."¹

We have gone on the assumption that only two kinds of issues can confront a government; namely, questions affecting a single state and questions affecting all the states. But this theory is no longer tenable. Many important issues and problems nowadays affect a group of states, a region, or a section. They are problems too big for any single state, yet not big enough for the nation as a whole. They should not be loaded upon an already overburdened

¹ *"tenuique in pulvere sulcos
Ducimus, et litus sterili versamus aratro."*

Juvenal, vii, 48.

Congress, yet they are obviously beyond the competence of any single state legislature. They belong by right to regional governments, if we had such things.

Take a couple of timely illustrations. There is the Colorado River project, a matter of intense interest to the states of the Pacific Southwest. Six commonwealths are vitally concerned in the proposed utilization of this waterway for irrigation and power. By means of conferences and joint commissioners they have tried to reach some agreement which would allow the project to be carried through without prejudice to the riparian rights of each state; but thus far they have not been successful. The only available mechanism for reaching a consensus proved too cumbrous. So the whole problem has been thrust upon Congress for solution.

But Congress as a whole is not particularly interested, nor is there any good reason why it should be. Senators and representatives from New England and from the Southeastern states can hardly be blamed if they fail to get excited about the apportionment of water from a stream two thousand miles away. So they watch the game from the side-lines while those who are immediately interested stage a four-day filibuster. The action of Congress, when

and if it comes, is altogether unlikely to have much relation to the merits of this question.¹ But if we had some provision for regional governments, this matter could be promptly and judiciously handled on a basis of Southwestern self-determination.

Again, there is the proposed St. Lawrence River Ship Canal. It is a project of transcendent interest and importance to the states of the Northwest and Middle West. Obviously this undertaking goes far beyond the competence of any single commonwealth; on the other hand, it is hardly a matter of nationwide interest. If you think it is, ask anybody from the lower South or from the Pacific slope. If he has ever heard of the proposal to open this "frustrated seaway," it is by accident. Yet Congress will have to debate this project before long, and act upon it. If congressmen from the Boll-Weevil Belt vote to put public funds into this enterprise, you can rest assured that there is a *quid pro quo* in the offing. And it is a self-evident proposition that public business ought not to be done that way. The

¹ There is some doubt as to whether Congress has authority to settle the matter. This, with other questions, has been referred for study to a commission appointed by the President. If it should turn out that Congress has no power to resolve the controversy, what then?

trouble is that under our existing governmental set-up we have no other way.

Examples could be multiplied,—farm relief, Muscle Shoals, the Cape Cod canal—but there is hardly need for it. Problems which are sectional in character cannot be contracted into state or enlarged into national problems by mere dicta of constitutions and courts. To a certain extent, however, the desirability of recognizing sectional groupings officially and dealing with regions as entities of government has already been conceded by Congress—in the Federal Reserve Banking System, for example. State banking and national banking were both tried during the nineteenth century, but neither system was adequately able to meet the country's financial needs. The amazing success of the federal reserve system has been due, in considerable measure, to its recognition of the region as a basis for banking, and to the consequent ease with which banking facilities can be adjusted to the varying needs of the great regional areas. It has turned out to be a happy compromise between centralization and autonomy. The boards of governors in the twelve federal reserve districts are locally chosen and representative in character. They do not act uniformly, but adapt their policy to the requirements of the moment in their respec-

tive districts. The federal reserve board at Washington guides and advises, but it does not fully control these regional reserve authorities.

Our army administration has also been placed on a regional basis, with nine corps areas. The Interstate Commerce Commission, by the terms of the Transportation Act, is directed to deal with the railroads by regions, so far as the fixing of the standard return is concerned. More and more, then, our national laws are recognizing the region or group of states as an administrative entity. May this not lead, in time, to the establishment of full-fledged governmental entities standing midway between the states and the nation, with considerable powers allotted to them by constitutional amendment?

If we are not ready to do something of this sort, we must prepare for an enormous piling-up of both legislative and administrative authority in Washington. Year by year it keeps increasing at an accelerated pace. It goes on despite programs of economy and preachments concerning state rights. The times and conditions call for it. A generation hence, unless all signs fail, they will be calling for it even more loudly. We must look forward to the day (and it will arrive within the lifetime of some who are now living) when the United States will have a popula-

tion of a quarter-billion. The land will be about as fully industrialized from coast to coast as New England is to-day. The center of gravity in commerce will probably have shifted from the Atlantic seaboard to the Pacific,—to the Pacific Ocean, which a Los Angeles schoolboy recently defined as “the largest body of salt water in Southern California.”

Progress in technology, in the application of science to industry, and in transportation will have created all manner of new political problems, far more complicated than those with which the national and state governments are wrestling just now. For it is an axiom of political science that the difficulties of carrying on a government increase as the square of the newly-created human relations. To my mind it is quite inconceivable that our existing governmental machinery will be able to shoulder the load in the closing decades of the twentieth century without breaking down. Is it not well, therefore, that we turn our minds in good season to this problem of a possible elaboration in our governmental mechanism before the strain comes too heavily upon what we have? Too often, in the past, there has been a disinclination to face anything that is not within a decade or two of urgency. This lack of vision and prevision has been costly beyond

all measure. It is not an attribute of statesmanship.

To be sure, there are great and obvious difficulties in the way of any such proposal as I have rather vaguely suggested. Not in a day or in a generation will we see eight or ten regional governments established in this country, each with its governor-general and its own regional legislature. Our descendants, indeed, may never see it. The national traditions are all set against anything of the kind. Yet national administration has made a fair start in the direction of regionalizing, and there is every probability that the process will continue. Our national control of interstate commerce would be much more flexible and more efficient if we had regional boards for the regulation of interstate public utilities (such as street railways and motor stages), with a central board at Washington confining its jurisdiction to inter-regional commerce. A devolution of that sort is likely to eventuate some day. And if administrative decentralization is carried far enough, may it not lead in time to some mild form of legislative devolution as well?

Now there are those who will urge that we should strive to diminish sectionalism in the United States instead of providing channels through which it may

find stronger expression. But, as Professor Turner has shown, sectionalism is in some ways both "inevitable and desirable." What the United States of the twenty-first century will probably need, more than aught else, is the vigorous development of regional distinctiveness as a counterpoise to mass action on a national scale, dictated by mob psychology. As a nation to-day we are a seething mass of liberals and fundamentalists, militarists and pacifists, standpatters and go-getters, open-shoppers and closed-shoppers, regulars and insurgents, wets and dries, highbrows and hicks, metropolitans and Babbits,—not to speak of Yids, Wops, and native sons. This volatile mass, when it grows big enough, may get out of hand if a stabilized provincialism is not developed to hold it in check.

There is no likelihood that this provincial spirit will ever assume a menacing strength and challenge nationalism in America. The Boston Brahmin may continue to look upon the Charles River as the western boundary of the United States; but his tribe is not increasing. The forces which operate to break down provincialism in habits of thought and life are steadily increasing their power from coast to coast. The same magazines are read, the same radio music listened to, the same movies looked at, the same

syndicated humor laughed at,—by all Americans, regardless of race, color, or place of nativity. They are insidiously nationalizing the cut of our clothes, the interior decoration of our homes, the brands of food that we consume, and even the varieties of slang that our youngsters use. So long as all this goes on there is little danger that any regionalizing of our governmental mechanism would suffice to impair the concept of a nation truly one and indivisible.

The suggestion of regional government has some far-reaching implications. Glance for a moment at the most difficult problem that now confronts nation and states alike; the problem of enforcing prohibition. Is it not conceivable that regional option and enforcement might provide a solution—far from perfect, it is true,—but more workable than either of the two existing alternatives? For under our present governmental system we have only two choices. One of them is to let each state decide for itself and enforce its own decision. That is what we did before the adoption of the Eighteenth Amendment, and it proved altogether unsatisfactory because the individual state is in most cases too small an area for effectively enforcing a prohibitory law. The other alternative is the one now being tried; namely, pro-

hibition on a nation-wide scale, backed by the power of the national government. This may succeed, but conceivably it may fail. If it fails, it will be because certain regions of the country feel that national prohibition is being imposed on them against their will and are resolved to make it a failure if they can. At the present juncture the outcome is far from being a certainty either way. And if national prohibition should prove ultimately impracticable, what then? Shall we revert to state option, a policy which is bound to be an even greater fiasco than it was before? Or might the experiment of regional prohibition be worth a trial? The South, the Southwest, the Northwest, and the Pacific Slope could then go and stay as bone dry as they pleased, while New England and the Middle States could do otherwise if they chose. Such an arrangement would give a fair measure of regional self-determination in this matter while greatly broadening the area of enforcement in the arid sections. Not an ideal solution, to be sure, or one that should ever be tried save as a last resort; but there are times when great nations find even the last resort a welcome one.

One other phase of this question deserves a word. It concerns the constitutional basis upon which the American senate rests. Even under the conditions

of to-day, the principle of equal state representation has made this body the most unrepresentative elective chamber in the world: what will it become under the conditions of two or three generations hence? True enough, the national constitution is said to be unamendable on this point. No state, without its own consent, may be deprived of its equal representation in the senate. But an unamendable constitution is a contradiction in terms, and if the people of the United States make up their minds to alter the fundamental law, even on this point, they will find a way of accomplishing it. The device of stipulating that a constitution cannot be amended in some designated respect is as old as the art of government, but history records no instance in which it has permanently availed.

So, if and when the existing constitutional basis of representation in the Senate is sought to be changed, what new basis can be provided? Could the region be utilized to give the principle of equal territorial representation a renewed lease of life? From the equal representation of the states to the equal representation of the regional areas would not be so radical a change as any other that would-be reformers of the Senate have proposed. It would preserve the principle, draw representation much more nearly

proportionate to population (although by no means exactly so), and afford an enlarged constituency for the election of senators, thus helping to improve the quality of senatorial personnel.

Be all this as it may, we come back at last to a fundamental fact that neither statesmen nor political scientists are justified in ignoring. The United States is a league of nations within a nation; it is a vast and varied union of unlike regions, each possessing a sense of distinction in interests and in point of view from all the rest. Our national future must be molded by this outstanding fact, whether we will it or no.

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Harro, William B

The invisible government

